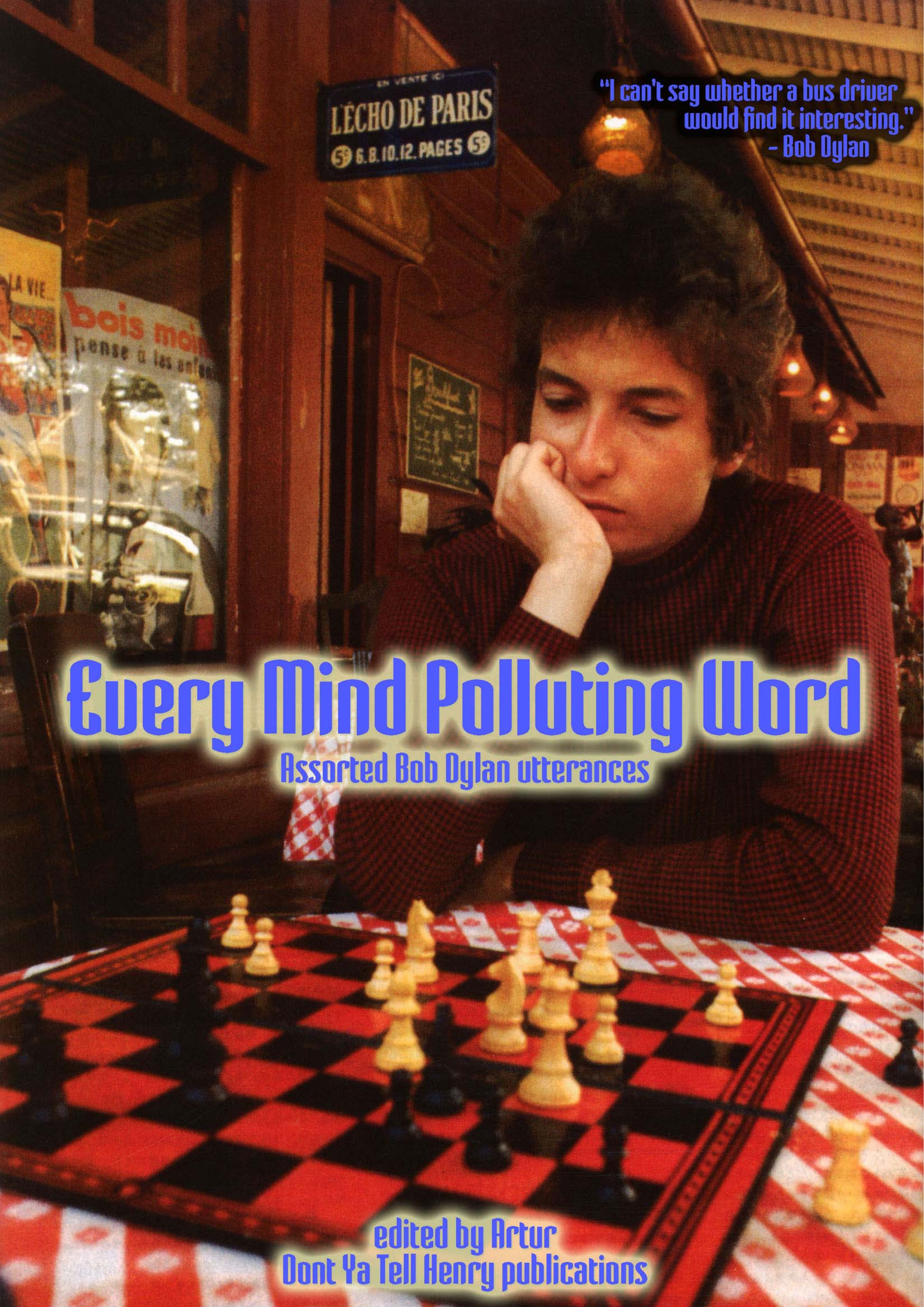


"I can't say whether a bus driver would find it interesting."
– Bob Dylan

Every Mind Polluting Word

Assorted Bob Dylan utterances

edited by Artur

Dont Ya Tell Henry publications

instead of a preface

the collection you have just opened combines all the bob dylan interviews which i happened t come across over the last decade or so and have kept in the vaults of my haunted mansion. the main purpose of the booklet has been t prepare a corpus of interviews that allows lookin up a phrase or word that dylan is supposed to have said on one or the other occasion. ctrl and f do the trick

dont take it too literal. naturally, not every mind pollutin word ever attributed t mr dylan in print is collected herein. of course not. there is a dedicated chapter at the end t show the reader what i know that is missin. undoubtedly, there are many more interviews, too, of which existence i am not aware at the time of writin

over seven hundred thousand mind pollutin words total. you have all moral right then to burst into wild spasms of truly diabolic laughter the next time you read "bob dylan never gives any interviews." buaha ha ha ha

for copyright reasons i feel compelled t tell you that all and any copyrighted material in the present publication is gathered here in fair use for the purpose of study, review or critical analysis only. remember how to act. you can have the best there is, but it's gonna cost you all your love. you won't get it for money

every effort has been made t ensure highest quality of the texts. sadly, this booklet had no proofreader, so do accept my apologies for any typos &/or scannin cock-ups your keen eyes may stumble upon. if you find any, feel free t mail me & i'll fix em asap for the next update

i consider this very booklet as a draft version a-waitin t be perfected in due course. whenever that may be. should you, dear reader, find yourself in possession of any interview that's not been included here & you happen t be in a joyous mood t share at the same time, please waste a second & drop me a line at bobdylan at poczta dot onet dot pl thank you kindly in advance. as long as health allows, i'll try t issue updates dependin on what new material is available t me or how many corrections need t be applied. all subsequent releases shall be announced by regular channels. If yuh got t know 'bout this one, you'll know about all follow-ups, too

& dont forget to save some trees for the kids, read it on your sceen

since no man is an island, i'm no exception despite the best intentions. chapeau bas & deepest thanks go (alphabetically) to:
Dag B., Graham C., Stephanie D., Michele L., Jesper P., Michel P., Peter S.B., Mike S., Stewart T., Nelien vV., W. & special thanks to ——— for continuous inspiration, support & for keepin my motivation alive

– eternal respect for thy help,

artur, the xxxx

Every Mind Polluting Word

assorted Bob Dylan utterances

a collection of speeches, interviews, press conferences, etc

— this is the *second* edition of 11 september 2006 —

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Summer 1958
Dylan's bedroom with John Bucklen, Hibbing, Minnesota

Source: Bringing It All Back Homepage

BBC "Highway 61 Revisited" programme summary

Richard Williams in *The Independent On Sunday* (8th May 1993) writes of this programme...

> "Most valuably, we get John Bucklen, Dylan's childhood friend, who produces a bedroom tape of the two boys wailing and a song called "*Hey Little Richard*". Bucklen's memories, untapped and dew-fresh, add a valuable dimension to our knowledge of the great American artist; for these two boys, he says, life then was about "friendship and music"."

Tales Of Rock n' Roll is the title of a BBC Arena series which goes behind four famous rock songs – "*Peggy Sue*", "*Walk On The Wild Side*", "*Heartbreak Hotel*" and finally "*Highway 61 Revisited*". This film was first broadcast at 20:30 GMT on BBC2 8th May 1993. Duration: 60 minutes.

Recording of Bob Dylan (BD) and John Bucklen (JB)

> ***Little Richard.***
> ***Oh, Little Richard.***

BD: It's your turn to sing now...

BD: This is Little Richard... (fakes wild crowd noises into microphone) **...Little Richard's got a lot of expression.**
JB: You think singing is just jumping around and screaming?
BD: You gotta have some kind of expression.
JB: Johnny Cash has got expression.
BD: There's no expression. (sings in boring, slow and monotone voice) ***"I met her at a dance St. Paul Minnesota... I walk the line, because you're mine, because you're mine..."***
JB: You're doing it wrong, you're just –

[1958 Tape fades out.]

JB: What's the best king of music?
BD: Rhythm and Blues.
JB: State your reason in no less that twenty-five minutes.
BD: Ah, Rhythm and Blues you see is something that you really can't quite explain see. When you hear a song of Rhythm and Blues – when you hear it's a good Rhythm and Blues song chills go up your spine...
JB: Whoa-o-o!
BD: ...When you hear a song like that. But when you hear a song like Johnny Cash, whadaya wanna do? You wanna leave, you wanna, you – when you hear a song like some good Rhythm and Blues song you wanna cry when you hear one of those songs.

[1958 Tape fades out.]

Well, buzz buzz buzz honey bee
_____________I ever heard
____________________darling
And the sweetest sound I ever heard

Well____the beauty of the red red rose
The beauty of the skies of blue
The beauty of the evening sunset here
Ain't but the beauty of you-u-uuu (Dylan sings line solo)

Honey, honey, honey comb
The beauty of the grapes on the vine
_____________________silence
And I woke up and said you was mine

[1958 Tape fades out.]

BD: (Indecipherable.)
JB: Listen, man you gotta to do it a little bit faster than that. I mean I'm trying to cut a fast record here, that's right –
BD: I can't help it.
JB: I know it ain't slow but it's not fast enough too.
BD: Whadaya talking about, man, that's plenty fast!
JB: No it isn't.
BD: That'll sell – that'll sell (snaps fingers) **just like that – ten million in a week! Weeeeeeelllll!** (plays first note on piano)
JB: What are you trying to do man, coming in with 'weeelll' like that? I mean –
BD: Well that's for the new song and I'm starting another one.

[1958 Tape fades out.]
[Music – Elvis singing "*Blue Moon*" – blends into the 1958 Tape of Bob Dylan and John Bucklen singing "*We Belong Together*".]

BD: Yeah, ah, Ricky Nelson. Now Ricky Nelson's another one of these guys. See Ricky Nelson, Ricky Nelson -
JB: Ricky Nelson is out of the question.
BD: Well he copies Elvis Presley! Yeaah, it's perfectly...
JB: He can't do like Elvis Presley.
BD: Well he can't sing at all, Ricky Nelson. So we may as well forget him. See I mean – I mean, ya know when you hear music like The Diamonds. For instance The Diamonds are really cool, they're out on the street really popular, really record [?]**, you know. So they're popular big stars but where, where do they get all the songs? You know they get all their songs, they get all their songs from little groups. They copy all the little groups. Same thing with Elvis Presley. Elvis Presley, who did he copy? He copied Clyde McPhatter, he copied Little Richard...**
JB: Wait a minute, wait a minute!
BD: ...he copied the Drifters
JB: Wait a minute, name, name, name four songs that Elvis Presley's copied from those, from those little groups.
BD: He copied all the Richard songs -
JB: Like what? –
BD: "*Rip It Up*," "*Long Tall Sally*," "*Ready Teddy*," err – what's the other one...

JB: "*Money Honey*"?
BD: No, "*Money Honey*" he copied from Clyde McPhatter. He copied "*I Was The One*" – he copied that from the Coasters. He copied, ah, "*I Gotta Woman*" from Ray Charles.
JB: Er, listen that song was written for him.

[1958 Tape fades out.]

BD: Rhythm and Blues... When you hear a song like some good Rhythm and Blues song you wanna cry when you hear one of those songs.

[1958 Tape fades out.]

28 April 1961
Bob Dylan's postcard home

Source: *ISIS* #85, 6-7/99, p. 5; in: TWM #1458(4239)

On 28 April 1961, Bob Dylan sent a postcard of the United Nations Secretarial Building from New York to his parents. The message was as follows:

Dear Everybody – I've finished my time at Folk City now I am at the Gaslight in New York, too. My union costs were $128.00. It came out of my pay at Folk City. I am now making $100.00 a week for five nights playing – that's not bad, considering that three months ago I was unknown. I've already played the top place in New York for folk music... I will call home Sunday at Aunt Irene's house. I don't know if I can come home then (or when I expect to now)... I am clean and I am brushing my teeth. Say hello to everybody for me. Love, Bob

The postcard was addressed to Dylan's parents, c/o Uncle Vernon Stone in Las Vegas, whom Abe and Beatty were visiting at the time

October 1961
Billy James Interview, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 1-6.

Supposedly, but disputably so, the very first Bob Dylan interview ever, conducted by Billy James (BJ) of Columbia Records in order to get information for the sleeve of Dylan's first album and for general promotional purposes. James, who was to become a close friend and adviser to Dylan in the early years and who appeared with Dylan at many press conferences was given the job of promoting Columbia's new rising star. James recalls the interview thus:

> "Hammond called me and said: 'Billy, I have a marvelous boy in the studio right now. Do you have a moment to come up? I knew that it was happening... right there! He had such an incredible blend of influences, and presented them with conviction. Bobby was reluctant to talk about his past. I had encountered that often before. I was really startled to hear of all the places he had been to. He spoke with knowledge of all those places, not like the traveling salesman who only knows the inside of his hotel room."

I have tried to reconstruct the interview, as far as possible, using the circulating tape (which is in poor quality and very fragmented), two articles by Barry Miles (New Musical Express 24 April 1976; 2 July 1977) the Miles book — In His Own Words and by reference to Stephen Pickering's Praxis One. In the first NME article Miles gives an interview date of August 1961 which he changes to October 1961 in the second NME article: Heylin gives a date of November of that year. Since Dylan didn't sign to CBS until October 26th 1961, the interview is most unlikely to have been before then and a suggested date based on available evidence is late October – early November

BD: Well let me say that I was born in Duluth, Minnesota – give that a little plug. That's where I was born and uh, out in the Midwest most of my life. Well, about three–quarters of my life around the Midwest and one quarter around the southwest – New Mexico. But then I lived in Kansas – Marysville, Kansas and, uh, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I bounced around a lot as a kid.

BJ: Was that your choice?

BD: It was my choice partly. Partly it wasn't. I ran away a lot – stuff like that. I'd rather say just that.

BJ: When was the first time you ran away as you put it?

BD: I took off when I was in New Mexico. I lived in Gallup, New Mexico.

BJ: How old were you then?

BD: Uh, about seven. Seven – eight – something like that. For the most part my base has been in upper – way upper – Minnesota. Almost to the border. Can I mention the town? Hibbing, Minnesota – that's a mining town – lumber town. I was there off and on ever since I was about seven to seventeen.

BJ: You were in Gallup when you were seven and you took off? Were you alone?

BD: Yeah, well, I was with a carnival when I was about thirteen and I used to travel with a carnival – all kinds of shows.

BJ: Where did you go with the carnivals?

BD: All around the Midwest. Uh, Gallup, New Mexico, then to Texas, and then... Lived in Gallup, New Mexico and...

BJ: How far did you get when you were seven and left Gallup?

BD: Oh... Well, I was with an uncle and, uh, I was in Texas, then Kansas. But this stuff you see, I can't really remember so hot. All I remember is basic – base things. Where I could, uh, just base things, sort of like...

BJ: Did you go to school much?

BD: Yeah, I went to school. I graduated. I graduated from high school – that's where I graduated – Hibbing.

BJ: I see. Did you go to high school for four years in Hibbing?

BD: Well, I graduated. I skipped a grade.

BJ: How long were you with the carnival?

BD: I was with the carnival for a long time every year. I was with the carnival summers and even part–ways into the winters.

BJ: What did you do?

BD: Uh, roustabout. I sung around. I didn't sing for any money but I learned a lot of songs in the carnival. Lot of songs that people are singing today I learned in that carnival. That's why I know all these songs they do now – at least a folk song – I've heard a version of it or something like it before.

BJ: And you have a good memory?

BD: Yeah. I guess I've memorized a lot of what I've heard – things I can remember back. Well, I write a lot of songs and I forget them. As soon as after I write them or sing them out loud – to myself or something – and then I forget 'em. But a lot of times when I take the time to write them down I usually sing 'em once in a while. I just wrote a new song, about oh, last week about New York. I wish I would have recorded it. Some people are singing it now at the Blue Angel: Ian and Sylvia. I taught it to Ian.

BJ: What made you start singing?

BD: Uh, well, I just did it you know. It was a natural thing to do. I started a long time ago too. I started singing after I started writing. I started that when I was about ten. Ten or eleven – and started out just country and western – Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell kind of things. Hank Williams had just about, had just died and I started playing sometime around there.

BJ: Was he one of your first influences?

BD: Yeah, I sang – I tried to sing everything he would sing.

BJ: What other influences have you had?

BD: Oh... I've had a lot of people that I tried to do things the way that they did. Ah, as it stands now, there's influence that maybe I've taken. I don't really know the extent of the influence that they have on what I do. Of Hank, Hank Williams was the first influence I would think. I guess for a longer period of time than anybody else influenced. Uh, nobody influenced what I wrote at that age because I didn't really see anything that anybody wrote.

BJ: Well, let's put it this way, did you have any idols when you first started writing?

BD: Yeah, well, sure, sure. Well not when I started writing, when I was singing. I never sang what I wrote until I got to be about eighteen or nineteen. I wrote songs when I was younger, fifteen, but they were songs. I wrote those. I never sang anything which I wanted to write. Y'understand? The songs I wrote at that age were just four chords rhythm and blues songs. Based on things that the Diamonds would sing, or the Crewcuts, or groups like this, the uh, the, you know, *In The Still Of The Night* kinda songs, you know. But I don't know, you know, whatever hit me.

BJ: What are your earliest memories of singing?

BD: Well, I've been singing for an awful long time. First guitar I ever had was a very old guitar and the strings were about an inch from the keyboard. That's why I use a flat pick when I play now – and I never got unused to using that flat pick – because I could never get those strings. They were heavy strings and my fingers hurt.

BJ: How old were you?

BD: About ten.

BJ: Who gave it to you?

BD: Down at uh, uh... I got it in Chicago on the South Side. I think from a street singer. I didn't get it from him, I got it from a friend of his – Aravella Grey. He was the singer and, uh, let's see – there's Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I learned a lot of songs there. I learned – not a lot, but I learned. I didn't learn songs, I just learned ways of singing. I learned the way of singing I do. I didn't really learn so many songs. There was this fellow there on a farm right in Sioux Falls, South Dakota – a little bit out – played autoharp. And he was just a farmhand there. He was from Kansas. I learned just ways of singing from people like that. But I never really heard any other way. I played piano when I was seventeen. I played piano for this rock n' roll singer. His name is Bobby Vee and he's a big star now, I guess.

BJ: Now where was this?

BD: That was in Fargo, North Dakota. Then we went all around the Midwest. Went to Wisconsin, Iowa, toured around there and then I left.

BJ: How long were you with him?

BD: I was with him for about, uh, every night – just about every night – for about a month or two. And then as soon as I left him he got on another recording label and then I saw his picture in big picture magazines and that kind of stuff not too long after that. So that was sort of a disappointment. But I always figured that – I just like to feel that I know where I'm at. Because if I know where I'm at, then I figure I got anybody beat. Because then if nothing happens that I expect to, then if I don't get some girl that I like, or if I don't get something like that, I always just figure that if I know where I'm at, then nothing will hurt me and then I'll never be disappointed. Then if something comes up, you know, then it's for the good. I mean, it's not really pessimistic or anything like that, but it's just that I like to feel that I know where I'm at.

BJ: Do you?

BD: Yeah, pretty sure I do. I'm at the stage now where I never thought I could sort of look back and see something but I knew I could sing better than all those people that are singing now. And I knew that I could sing the same songs much better if only I had the chance to and I'm just getting that chance to in New York. I had the chance to around the country – but I can't reach as many people around the country. And I've had the chance just breaking for me now in New York.

BD: Because my idol is really – like when I'm even on the stage – and not even on stage – my biggest idol goin' all through my head all the time is Charlie Chaplin. And, uh, it's, uh, well, it takes a while to explain it but I'd say he's one of *the* men!

BJ: When did you first see Chaplin?

BD: Ah, I seen some of his films. I just sort of knew who he was and that kind of stuff. Vaudeville type of thing. Will Rogers. And I never really met anything — I never really came across anything until... I never came across... I never lived in a big city until I lived in New York and, uh, I don't think it's got the best of me. At least I know it hasn't got the better part of me. In fact I don't think it's touched... It might've touched me a little bit. In fact it has touched me a little bit. But I never lived in a city that was more than 15,000 people and there's an awful lot of difficulty here...

Tape breaks.

BD: (Talking about first arriving in New York City) **...and I was very stupid at the time. I was with a friend of mine, and I played, and they flipped, and I figured...**

BJ: Which Café?

BD: **Café Wha. I didn't know anything. They were having a hootenanny and that kind of stuff and I asked if they would give me some money to play, and he looked at me and he said he would. "I'll give you a dollar." So he gave me a dollar to play in the hootenanny. No, in fact, it came to a dollar–fifty. And I played there and they flipped. They really did. I**

figured if they liked me so much that maybe someone would have a place to stay that night 'cause I didn't have a place to stay that night. So I asked from the stage and about four hands went up. So my buddy and I, we sort of went and checked 'em all and picked out a fellow. He was with a girl. And my buddy says to me, "You don't look so hot", that's what he said. He said, "He looks pretty gay", (James laughs)**. And I said, uh, I didn't really know anything about that kind of stuff. Well I knew, anyway, he was with a girl. And so we went up with him and the girl got off at 34th Street and we got off at 42nd street** (Dylan laughs)**. Well, we went in a bar first before we went to find a place to stay and we met his friend Dora. Dora was his friend who stayed with him. And we all went to a party. And that was my first night in New York.**

(Talking of the folk scene)
I sense they're liking me. Maybe not the music so much. Maybe they don't even like the music but I feel like, if they saw me in the street or playing someplace, I feel like they wouldn't be so friendly.

I like the land. The people are strange in the West. I like some of the people. Don't like some of the people. Hard, which I never could see. Very hard people. And down South it's worse than that. I can't stand city people from the South. I hate... I can't stand, anywhere they're thinking...

Tape breaks

BD: I'm not a folk singer. I just sing a certain place, that's all. And...
BJ: Is Woody a folk singer?
BD: Woody was a folk singer. Woody was a folk singer.
BJ: Why do you say you're not?
BD: Ah, Woody was a folk singer to the point. Woody was a glorified folk singer. Woody was a man that went back... Don't print this on the record.
BJ: No man, no.
BD: Well, you see, Woody was a man who dwelled on a simpleness because he was getting attention for it...

Tape breaks.

BD: I play the piano. I used to play the piano. I used to play great piano, very great. I used to play piano like Little Richard stuff only an octave higher. And everything came out... He played, he had a big mistake. His records were great records but could've been greater records. His mistake was he played too low. If he had played high everything would have compensated. Do you listen to Little Richard?
BJ: No.
BD: Well, Little Richard's something else. He's a preacher now. But I sort of played the piano in his style. And I played everything high and amplified it.

October 1961
Izzy Young Notebooks, Folklore Center, New York City, NY

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 971-977.

Izzy Young, proprietor of the Folklore Center at 110 MacDougal Street in New York City's Greenwich Village, kept copious notes of most of what went on around him. Some of those entries, particularly around October 1961, provide details of discussions with Bob Dylan. Some of this is "interview" material, carefully written down by Young and checked by Dylan, especially that part which would eventually appear as program notes for Bob's first concert on November 4, 1961. Other entries are just reasonably accurate paraphrasing of what Dylan had to say.

<u>Notebook entry for October 20, 1961</u> and used for the Carnegie Recital Hall program.

Bob Dylan was born in Duluth, Minnesota in 1941. He was raised in Gallup, NM and before he came to New York earlier this year he lived in Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota and Kansas. He started playing carnivals at the age of fourteen, accompanying himself on guitar and piano. He picked up harmonica about two years ago.

The University of Minnesota gave him a scholarship. He went there for some five months, attended a dozen lectures and then left. He learned many blues songs from a Chicago street singer named Arvella Gray. He also met a singer – Mance Lipscomb – from the Brazos River country of Texas, through a grandson that sang rock and roll. He listened a lot to Lipscomb and he heard Woody Guthrie's album of Dust Bowl ballads in South Dakota. In fact Bob Dylan has sung old jazz songs, sentimental cowboy songs and Top 40 hit parade stuff. He was always interested in singers and didn't know the term 'folk music' until he came to New York.

"It has to be called a name so they call it folk music. Very few people sing that way and it's being taken over by people who don't sing that way. It's all right but don't call it folk music. Stuff I do is nearer to folk music. Now I don't want to make a lot of money, want to get along. I want to reach more people and have a chance to sing the kind of music I sing. People have to be ready and have seen me once already. People often say first time that it isn't folk music. My songs aren't easy to listen to. My favorite singers are Dave van Ronk, Jack Elliott, Peter Stampfel, Jim Kweskin and Rick von Schmidt. I can offer songs that tell something of this America, no foreign songs. The songs of this land that aren't offered over TV and radio and very few records."

"Groups are easy to be in. I've always learned the hard way. I will now, too. I dress the way I do because I want to dress this way and not because it is cheaper or easier."

"I started writing my songs about four or five years ago. First song was to Brigitte Bardot, for piano. Thought if I wrote the song I'd sing it to her one day. Never met her. I've written some Hillbilly songs that Carl Perkins from Nashville sings. I write talking blues on topical things. *California Brown-Eyed Baby* has caught on. Noel Stookey gave me the idea for the *Bear Mountain Song* and I wrote it overnight but I wasn't there. Never sing it the same way twice because I never wrote it down."

"No one is really influencing me now – but actually everything does. Can't think of anyone in particular now."

<u>Notebook entry for October 23</u>

Played piano with Bobby Vee – would have been a millionaire if I'd stayed with him. Played piano Michigan Northwest to Montana. Sang for one dollar a day at Cafe Wha?, playing piano with Fred Neil. Bored stiff. It was warm and stayed a whole winter. Went to see *Raisin' in the Sun* – Lou Gosset was in it. Dead Man's Hand or Aces and Eights. I believe in them. Believe in cards. Play a lot of cards. It's time to cash in when you get Aces and Eights. The other things I believe in are logical – the length of ones hair – less hair on the head more hair inside the head & vice versa. Crew cut all hair cluttering around the brain. Let my hair grow long to be wise and free to think. I have no religion. Tried a bunch of different religions. Churches are divided. Can't make up their minds neither can I. Never seen a God – can't say till I see one...

Got a free ride to NY – came to see Woody Guthrie – Came to the Folklore Center -girl playing with banjo (Tony Mendell). **O God, this is it, this is NY. Everyone's playing banjo faster than I've been playing guitar. Couldn't really play with them. Used to see Woody whenever I had enough money. Met him once before in California before I was really playing – think Jack Elliott was with him. I think Billy Faier was there, too. I was in Carmel, California – doing nothing. During the summer. Woody impressed me. Always made a point to see him again. Wrote a song to Woody in February of this year. Was going to sing all Woody songs – Jack and Cisco came out. Woody carries the paper I wrote the song on. Woody likes to hear his own songs. Woody likes my songs.**

Haven't sung anything really funny. Woody doesn't like Joan Baez, or the Kingston Trio – Baez for her voice is too pretty and Trio because they can't be understood.

Sort of like NY, don't know really. I like to walk around, just walk around. Like to ride motorcycle – was a racer in North and South Dakota – Minnesota.

First guitar I had strings were 2 inches away from the board – had a flat pick but couldn't play it. Got a Martin for a present. 6 or 7 years. No one ever taught me to play guitar or harmonica, or piano. Used to play sort of boogy woogyish type of stuff, played with rock n' roll songs. Never knew the names of the songs, but 12 bar blues, played along with them. A few coffee houses refused to let me play when I came to NY. Bob Shelton helped by writing an article – talked around – someone from Elektra came down but nothing happened. Bob Shelton been like a friend for a long time. Friends are pretty hard to come by in NY. Dave Van Ronk has helped me along in card games because he's always losing. I've been with Jack – we have an Island upstate NY – we saw the Island out in the lake – we named the Island Delliott Isle and swam back. Jack hasn't taught me any songs. Jack doesn't know that many songs. He's had lots of chances. I went out to the Gleasons and stayed out there for a while in East Orange. They have a lot of tapes – his VD songs. Learned a bunch of those – sung them to Woody. Should get the rest from Harold Leventhal.

Met Jesse Fuller in Denver at the Exodus. I was playing in a stripper place. The Gilded Garter. Central City, a little mining town. Came down to Denver 2 summers ago – Jesse was playing downstairs. Upstairs was Don Crawford. Learned the way he does songs – mixed his style in with mine at the time. Before that there was a farmhand in Sioux Falls, S. D. who played the autoharp. Picked up his way of singing (Wilbur, never knew his last name).

Cowboy styles I learned from real cowboys. Can't remember their names. Met some in Cheyenne. Cowboys nowadays go to Cowboy movies and sit there and criticize. Wear their hat this way or that – pick up their way of walking from the movie. Some of them. In Central City Denver – the Tropics – played 20 minutes, strippers worked for 40 minutes with rock n'

roll band. I'd play for 20 minutes again. Never stopped. One night I was about ready to strip myself. Only lasted a week and a half. Worst place I ever played. A full drag.

I have different ideas about folk music now. There's been no one around to cut records like the old Leadbelly, Houston & Guthrie. There are young people that are singing like that, but are being held back by commercial singers. People who have radio programs don't play. Jim Kweskin, Luke Faust aren't appreciated by enough people. Folkways is the only company that would record such stuff. Released Bill McAdoo's *Can't Let Little Children Starve To Death*. Liked title of song but hadn't heard it.

Went up to Folkways. I had written some songs. I says "Howdy, I've written some songs. Would you publish some songs" – wouldn't even look at them. I heard Folkways was good. Irwin Silber didn't even talk to me. Never got to see Moe Asch. They just about said "Go" and I heard that *Sing Out!* was supposed to be helpful and friendly. Big heart. Charitable. I thought it was the wrong place and Sing Out! was on the door. Whoever told me that was wrong. It seems ironic I'm on a big label. The article came out on Thursday night – Bruce Langhorne and I backed up by Carolyn Hester. Showed the article to John Hammond – Come in and see me. I did. And he is recording me. He asked me what I do. I've got about 20 songs I want to record. Some stuff I've written. Some stuff I've discovered and some stuff I stole. That's about it.

Used to see girls from the Bronx, at Chicago, Antioch, with their gutstring guitars, singing *Pastures of Plenty*, no lipstick, Brotherhood songs. Struck me funny, not clowns, opened up a whole new world of people. I like the NY kind of girl now. Can't remember what the old kind was like. Can always tell a New Yorker out of town – want everyone to know they're from NY. I've seen it happen – first 4 or 5 days people just stare at me. Down South it's bad to say you're from NYC.

We played the new Bill McAdoo recording on Folkways. *Gonna Walk And Talk For My Freedom* with Pete Seeger on banjo. Beatniks: 10 years ago a guy would get on a bus with a beard, long sideburns, a hat and people would say "look at the Rabbi". Some guy gets on a bus today. The same people say "look at the Beatnik". Played the Fifth Avenue Hotel for the Kiwanis Club. Got job through Kevin Krown – for no money (I don't like the McAdoo Record). A lot of different acts that night -dressed up like a clown – when someone would sing two clowns would perform. Jack just dropped in. Couldn't hear myself- a clown rolled up to pinch my cheek – kicked him in the nuts and no one saw. Rest of the clowns left me alone. Made Kevin Krown buy me 10 drinks. Met Krown in Denver, came through Chicago – never got back 75 cents owed him but stayed at his place.

OK but don't care for classical music. Don't go for any foreign music. I really like Irish music and Scottish music, too. Colleges are the best audiences, much better than nightclubs. NY is the best place for music.

School was too – lived on the Mississippi River – about 10 feet away under a great bridge. I took some theater course. Said I had to take Science. Average credits is about 12 – you can take 17 to 20. I enrolled with 26 credits. Narrowed it down to 20. Then down to 9. Couldn't even make that. Carnivals and fraternities – so much crap. So much phooey stuff. You might as well get out and live with some other people. A big hoax. Flunked out of anthropology – read a little, went to see the movies. One time I flunked out of English for teacher said I couldn't talk. Poetry we had to read, had to think about it for a long time. Poem should reach as many people as possible. I spent more time in Kansas City about 400 miles away. A girl friend was there. Went to High School in Upper Minnesota (Hibbing) **a nothing little town.**

Fargo in North Dakota – a lumberjack and mining town. Used to hop train. Big open pit. Lots of strikes there, lots of political stuff, a real mining town.

It's easy to criticize big money makers like Belafonte, Kingston Trio. Stuff he does is really like a popular singer – criticized by Jazz, Folk and Calypso people and he's making all the money. Won't criticize him until he sings one of my songs but then he'll make a lot of money for me. I liked Belafonte on the TV show.

Odetta: her and frustrated show singers – folk music is wide open for good voices. Instead of starting out at the bottom in Opera or Show or Jazz they start at the top in folk music.

Logan English – is one guy that if I don't have to see him – great – but the guy is just, Christ, everytime I see him, his failure, singing folk music for there is, still trying. Logan's singing is one big bash of phooey. He's terrible. Lots of people sing simple -but Logan dwells on this – but no better – doesn't have it. Kills him but he sings Jimmy Rodgers – Peter LaFarge is a great song writer.

Bruce Langhorne is great. Was at a party once, playing. Let me have a guitar, didn't have much fingers. I can't laugh. Read *Bound for Glory* twice. Book should he taught to College kids – his poetry should be taught in English classes.

Got a bad deal from Brother John Sellers.

Highway 77 – McKinley's bar in Kansas to the 5th Avenue Hotel in NYC.

We put on John Jacob Nile's new double record. I like him. Too much. Sort of. Niles is really great. I think he's a genius.

<u>Notebook entry for Feb, 1, 1962</u>

Wrote a song the other night *Ballad of Emmett Till*. After I wrote it someone said another song was written but not like it. I wrote it for CORE – I'm playing it Feb. 23. I think it's the best thing I've ever written. Only song I play with a capo. Stole the melody from Len Chandler – a song he wrote about a Colorado busdriver.

"born a black skinned boy
and he was born to die"

"just a reminder to remind your fellow men
that this kind of thing still lives today
in the ghost robed Klu Klux Klan"

I bought an apartment cost 350 dollars. Rent is 80 dollars. 161 W. 4th St, c/o Walker. Getting some money from Columbia. I'm supposed to be making all kinds of money. I seem, I don't play guitar if I don't feel like playing. I'd rather get drunk. I hate coffeehouses to play at. People come down to see freaks. Sometimes I'm in a bad mood. I don't like the idea too much. Carnival was different for I was with the same people. Entertainers in coffeehouses just don't have that togetherness.

Hope to stay in NY for a while. Might go down to New Orleans for the Mardi Gras. I like New York. At one time I said – if it wasn't for New York I'd move there. And I sort of like the town.

42nd St. That's about all. I went to Brooklyn Hospital. Seeing him steady for a year. I met him when I was thirteen. He likes my songs. You have to see the notes by Stacey Williams (A pseudonym used by Bob Shelton when writing liner notes)**. Never figured I'd play with Belafonte. I practice piano at Bob's house. Next album I'll play piano, guitar and harmonica. Writing a song called *The Death of Robert Johnson*. Columbia's** (recordings are: ed.) **the greatest of his work. Don't like to go up to John Hammond. Ivy League kids treat me like a king. At first I liked it. It gets sickening after a while. I took Len Chandler just to see what would happen. He couldn't believe it. Leed's book comes out in April with 13 songs, 3 arrangements. Hammond isn't a manager – more an advisor. I'm sort of disconnecting myself from the folk music scene. I've got a lot of friends in for that play. Too many guys want to make a big entertainment out of it with jazz and comedians.**

30 year old guy Buffalo Bill – looks older. Why isn't he recorded. Moe Asch has a tape – "We've got guys from the South" – almost saying "he's not dead yet". Gil Turner brought the tape to him. Curious to know how long the New Lost City Ramblers stayed at the Blue Angel.

Can't see the future. I hate to think about it. It's a drag to think about it.

How could anyone notice if I were drunk. I'm inconspicuous.

Notebook entry for February 17, 1962

***Let Me Die In My Footsteps* written while Gil Turner and I were in Toronto in Dec. 1961. I set out to say something about fallout and bomb-testing but I didn't want it to be a slogan song. Too many of the protest songs are bad music. Exception being *Which Side Are You On*. Most of the mining songs are good. Especially the bomb songs – usually awkward and with bad music. Which takes a stand – no beating around the bush.**

Came to NYC in 1960 – back to Oklahoma several times. Disastrous trip to California – no one liked me. Felt pretty low when I left. More than 20 songs.

Notebook entry for Feb. 22, 1962

Jesse Fuller – April 20, 21, 22 – at Ann Arbor. Just me and Jesse Fuller. Concert at Goddard College. Billy James from Columbia Records doesn't want me to sign for too many things so as not to interfere with their plans until the record comes out. Left my life there. Waiting for my book to come out – more than the record. *Rambling Gambling Willy* is in the book. *Bear Mountain*. *Reminiscence Blues*. *Stand on the Highway*. *Poor Boy Blues*. *Talking NY*. *Song to Woody Guthrie*.

I wanted to write a song about 1 and a half years ago on Fallout Shelters to tune *So Long It's Been Good To Know You*. Song I wrote isn't like the rest of them.

Carolyn Hester's record will be out in May or next September. Mine is coming out in two weeks and she recorded two months before me.

Emie Marrs is writing songs all over the place. I never even looked at them. To tell you the truth, except a few. They're pretty good, I guess.

I like Johnny Cash's songs. Because he's not trying to cover up. Writes real stuff. He writes a lot of songs. I think Woody Guthrie wrote better songs. I've seen some songs he never recorded.

Favorite Woody Guthrie Songs ? *Jack Hammar John*. *At the Mound of Your Grave*. *Slip Knot*. *Hard Traveling*. I like, them all really. Except some of them are absurd. *Dirty Overalls* that's really good.

I just pick the melody out of the air sometimes.

Prestige Records, one of their guys – if Columbia doesn't – give me a call.

Folkways asked me for contemporary songs for an album of my own songs.

Bill McAdoo's albums are terrible. Writes songs to hold up a banner. He's just another Leon Bibb – same kind of voice. Don't think there's anything traditional about it. He's a nice guy though.

Alan Lomax? I like him. He stuck around one night to hear me sing at the Bitter End. Ed McCurdy was MC. There was not time. I sang along with Bessy Jones at his house. We were sitting around eating apples.

Sure wish Cisco Houston was still alive. I really didn't know him. I liked him because he was real, just a singer.

Heard Bonny Dobson last night. She's OK, I guess. I heard Big Joe Williams when I was 9 or 10, in Chicago. I really didn't play so much. I just followed him around. I sung then. I got a cousin living in Chicago. He lives on the South Side. Funny thing. Big Joe Williams remembers it.

(After writing some lyrics about the Folklore Center.)

Good songwriter? I think Paul Anka is the worst songwriter. Saw some of his songs in the hit-parade book. I think Johnny Cash is the best songwriter.

Len Chandler – Ian and Sylvia have picked up some songs.

***Strange Rain*? I don't understand it. *Umbrella*? Why can't he say – don't shoot off those bombs. You ought to go to Nevada where all the stuff is going on. Go out there – you'll find some strange rain. I think dentists and scientists are together on this. How can you like a song you can't understand? In a foreign language. But this is our language. I should be able to understand it. Said he wouldn't understand it if I didn't explain.**

Notebook entry for March 14th, 1962

***Life and Death of Don White*. Actually I wrote it a long time ago. I just finished it up. What's the story of the song? I'll sing it for you. Not a bunch of people suffering. One person. So it's justified. He was a common guy. No martyr or anything like that. But he had a right to be in an institution when he asked.**

PM East (A New York weekly) **in two weeks. No contract with Leeds exclusively. If I wrote to sell, I could do 20 a day. I'm just not. Can't see anything in it. Some of the songs passed off as songs! These are contemporary songs.**

29 October 1961
Oscar Brand Show, WNYC Radio, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 7-8

According to Izzy Young's notebooks for 25th October 1961, he recalls "Oscar Brand walked into the store and I got Dylan on his programme this Sunday". Accordingly, Dylan appeared on Brand's WNYC Radio show *Folksong Festival* on October 29th, starting at 6 o'clock in the evening. This was his first ever solo radio spot. And, back to Izzy Young:

> "...and he sang two songs, his own songs and he was mumbling. You couldn't understand 'em. I was very embarrassed and Oscar was embarrassed. But, anyway, he put him on the radio."

Taken from tape source.

OB: Now, November the 4th, Saturday, Bob Dylan will be singing at the Carnegie Chapter Hall and that should be a very eventful occasion. Bob was born in Duluth, Minnesota but, uh, Bob, you weren't raised in Duluth, were you?
BD: I was raised in Gallup, New Mexico.
OB: Do you get many songs there?
BD: They gotta lot of cowboy songs there, Indian songs, carnival songs, that Vaudeville kinda stuff.
OB: Now where do you get your carnival songs from?
BD: Ah! People in the carnival.
OB: Did you travel with it or did you watch the carnival?
BD: I traveled with the carnival when I was about thirteen years old.
OB: For how long?
BD: All the way up to I was nineteen. Every year, off and on, I joined different carnivals.
OB: Well I'd like to hear one of the kinds of music that you've been singing and I know you've been doing quite well and I know you'll be singing at the Carnegie Chapter Hall. Do you wanna pick something out?
BD: Well, I'll pick out a carnival song that I learned... that I wrote there. Do you wanna hear one of them ?

Sally Gal plays

OB: Thank you Bob Dylan for *Sally Gal* and we'll expect you back before the end of tonights, *Folksong Festival*.

Intermission

OB: I'm Oscar Brand and I'm here at WNYC, New York. Now let's return to our guest this evening. His name is Bob Dylan and November 4th he will be at Carnegie Chapter Hall in a very exciting concert of songs that he's collected since his first days when he was born in Minnesota and then he went down to the South West, he traveled around the country with carnivals and as we heard earlier, he's collected a lot of many songs from many people. Bob, I know that that means when you travel that much that you hear a lot of songs but doesn't it also means... mean that you forget a lot of songs that way?
BD: Oh yeah, I learned... I forgot quite a few, I guess, and once when I forget them I usually heard the name of them and looked them up in some book and learned them again.
OB: Oh! Can you read music?

BD: No, I can't, but this here songs a good example. I learned it from a farmer in South Dakota and he played the autoharp. His name is Wilbur. Met him outside of Sioux Falls when I was there visiting people and him, and I heard him do it. I was looking through a book one time, I saw the same song and I remembered the way he did it so – this is the song.

The Girl I Left Behind plays

OB: Thank you very much Bob Dylan and very best of luck on your concert, November 4th at Carnegie Chapter Hall on which I know, that as your audience realizes, there'll be a lot of exciting material, new and beautifully presented. And thanks very much Israel Young and the Folklore Centre for bringing Bob Dylan and for sponsoring the concert he's going to have too.

Sometime in 1962
Dylan's inscription in Sue Rotolo's book of poetry by Lord Byron

Source: *ISIS*#118, Dec 2004/Jan 2004, p.34-35

To You From
I, Me, Bob
On this holy day
I give to you
this here
present that
I purchased
for you in
the New York
rain

Hatfully
Loving
You,
Lord Byron Dylan
1962

March 1962
"Bob Dylan" LP. liner notes

Source: *Bob Dylan* LP. liner notes (62022), also reprinted in the remastered CD (519891 2)

CBS is proud to introduce a major new figure in American folk music—Bob Dylan.

Excitement has been running high since the young man with a guitar ambled into a recording studio for two sessions in November, 1961. For at only 20, Dylan is the most unusual new talent in American folk music.

His talent takes many forms. He is one of the most compelling white blues singers ever recorded. He is a songwriter of exceptional facility and cleverness. He is an uncommonly skillful guitar player and harmonica player.

In less than one year in New York, Bob Dylan has thrown the folk crowd into an uproar. Ardent fans have been shouting his praises. Devotees have found in him the image of a singing rebel, a musical Chaplin tramp, a young Woody Guthrie, or a composite of some of the best country blues singers.

A good deal of Dylan's steel-string guitar work runs strongly in the blues vein, although he will vary it with country configurations, Merle Travis picking and other methods. Sometimes he frets his instrument with the back of a kitchen knife or even a metal lipstick holder, giving it the clangy virility of the primitive country blues men. His pungent, driving, witty harmonica is sometimes used in the manner of Walter Jacobs, who plays with the Muddy Waters' band in Chicago, or the evocative manner of Sonny Terry.

Another strong influence on Bob Dylan was not a musician primarily, although he has written music, but a comedian—Charlie Chaplin. After seeing many Chaplin films, Dylan found himself beginning to pick up some of the gestures of the classic tramp of silent films. Now as he appears on the stage in a humourous number, you can see Dylan nervously tapping his hat, adjusting it, using it as a prop, almost leaning on it, as the Chaplin tramp did before him.

Yet despite his comic flair, Bob Dylan has, for one so young, a curious preoccupation with songs about death. Although he is rarely inarticulate, Dylan can't explain the attraction of these songs, beyond the power and emotional wallop they give him, and which he passes on to his listeners. It may be that three years ago, when a serious illness struck him, that he got an indelible insight into what those death-haunted blues men were singing about.

His Life and Times

Bob Dylan was born in Duluth, Minnesota, on May 24, 1941. After living briefly in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Gallup, New Mexico, he graduated from high school in Hibbing, Minnesota **"way up by the Canadian border."**

For six troubled months, Bob attended the University of Minnesota on a scholarship. But like so many of the restless, questing students of his generation, the formal confines of college couldn't hold him.

"I didn't agree with school," he says. **"I flunked out. I read a lot, but not the required readings."**

He remembers staying up all night plowing through the philosophy of Kant instead of reading *Living With the Birds* for a science course.

"Mostly," he summarizes his college days, **"I couldn't stay in one place long enough."**

Bob Dylan first went East in February, 1961. His destination: the Greystone Hospital in New Jersey. His purpose: to visit the long-ailing Woody Guthrie, singer, ballad-maker and poet. It was the beginning of a deep friendship between the two. Although they were separated by thirty years and two generations, they were united by a love of music, a kindred sense of humour and a common view toward the world.

The young man from the provinces began to make friends quickly in New York, all the while continuing, as he has since he was ten, to assimilate musical ideas from everyone he met, every record he heard. He fell in with Dave Van Ronk and Jack Elliott, two of the most dedicated musicians then playing in Greenwich Village, and swapped songs, ideas and stylistic conceptions with them. He played at the Gaslight Coffee-house, and in April, 1961, appeared opposite John Lee Hooker, the blues singer, at Gerde's Folk City. Word of Dylan's talent began to grow, but in the surcharged atmosphere of rivalry that has crept into the folk-music world, so did envy. His Talkin' New York is a musical comment on his reception in New York.

Recalling his first professional music job, Bob says:

"I never thought I would shoot lightning through the sky in the entertainment world."

In 1959, in Central City, Colorado, he had that first job, in a rough and tumble striptease joint.

"I was onstage for just a few minutes with my folky songs. Then the strippers would come on. The crowd would yell for more stripping, but they went off, and I'd come bouncing back with my folky songs. As the night got longer, the air got heavier, the audience got drunker and nastier, and I got sicker and finally I got fired."

Bob Dylan started to sing and play guitar when he was ten. Five to six years later he wrote his first song, dedicated to Brigitte Bardot. All the time, he listened to everything with both ears—Hank Williams, the late Jimmie Rodgers, Jelly Roll Morton, Woody Guthrie, Carl Perkins, early Elvis Presley. A meeting with Mance Lipscomb, Texas songster, left its mark on his work, as did the blues recordings of Rabbit Brown and Big Joe Williams. He speaks worshipfully of the sense of pace and timing the great blues men had, and it has become a trademark of his work already. His speed at assimilating new styles and digesting them is not the least startling thing about Bob Dylan.

The future:

"I just want to keep on singing and writing songs like I am doing now. I just want to get along. I don't think about making a million dollars. If I had a lot of money what would I do?" he asked himself, closed his eyes, shifted the hat on his head and smiled:

"I would buy a couple of motorcycles, a few air-conditioners and four or five couches."

His Songs

The number that opens this album, *You're No Good*, was learned from Jesse Fuller, the West Coast singer. Its vaudeville flair and exaggeration are used to heighten the mock anger of the lyrics.

Talkin' New York is a diary note set to music. In May, 1961, Dylan started to hitch-hike West, not overwhelmingly pleased at what he had seen and experienced in New York. At a truck stop along the highway he started to scribble down a few impressions of the city he left behind. They were comic, but tinged with a certain sarcastic bite, very much in the Guthrie vein.

Dylan had never sung *In My Time of Dyin'* prior to this recording session. He does not recall where he first heard it. The guitar is fretted with the lipstick holder he borrowed from his girl, Susie Rotolo, who sat devotedly and wide-eyed through the recording session.

Man of Constant Sorrow is a traditional Southern mountain folk song of considerable popularity and age, but probably never sung quite in this fashion before.

Fixin' to Die, which echoes the spirit and some of the words of *In My Time of Dyin'*, was learned from an old recording of Bukka White.

A traditional Scottish song is the bare bones on which Dylan hangs *Pretty Peggy-O*. But the song has lost its burr and acquired instead a Texas accent, and a few new verses and fillips by the singer.

A Diesel-tempoed *Highway 51* is of a type sung by the Everly Brothers, partially rewritten by Dylan. His guitar is tuned to an open tuning and features a particularly compelling vamping figure. Similarly uptempo is his version of *Gospel Plow*, which turns the old spiritual into a virtually new song.

Ric Von Schmidt, a young artist and blues singer from Boston, was the source of *Baby, Let Me Follow You Down*. *House of the Risin' Sun* is a traditional lament of a New Orleans woman driven into prostitution by poverty. Dylan learned the song from the singing of Dave Van Ronk: **"I'd always known *Risin' Sun* but never really knew I knew it until I heard Dave sing it."** The singer's version of *Freight Train Blues* was adapted from an old disk by Roy Acuff.

Song to Woody, is another original by Bob Dylan, dedicated to one of his greatest inspirations, and written much in the musical language of his idol.

Ending this album is the surging power and tragedy of Blind Lemon Jefferson's blues—*See That My Grave Is Kept Clean*. The poignance and passion of this simple song reveals both the country blues tradition—and its newest voice, Bob Dylan—at their very finest.

—STACEY WILLIAMS

11 March 1962
Cynthia Gooding Interview, WBAI FM Radio, New York City, NY

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 9-17.

From the studios of the New York Radio Station WBAI -FM for the *Folksingers Choice* program. The interviewer and regular program presenter was Cynthia Gooding (CG). There is confusion about the exact date of the recording and even over whether the program was eventually broadcast. What we actually hear is the unedited version of the studio session. Dylan and Gooding chat between each of the 11 songs, a duration of around one hour. Dylan continues to expound his 'alternative biography' and his tall stories have become quite stereotyped. Gooding is a receptive listener and there's an obvious magic between the two. She had met Dylan on a number of occasions previously, going back to 1959 when they both attended a party after one of her concerts. Apparently Dylan sang to her and she was much impressed. Later, when she saw Dylan performing at the *Folk City* in New York, she commented.

> "People listen... he talks and he laughs and just when they are about to catch him in a lie, he takes out his harmonica and blows them down."

Was she fully aware of Bob's penchant for tall stories when she interviewed him?

Transcribed from tape source.

Lonesome Whistle Blues

CG: That was Bob Dylan. Just one man doing all that. Playing the... er... mouth harp and guitar because, well, when you do this you have to wear a little sort of, what another person might call a necklace.

BD: Yeah!

CG: And then it's got joints so that you can bring the mouth harp up to where you can reach it. To play it. Bob Dylan is, well, you must be twenty years old now aren't you?

BD: Yeah. I must be twenty. (laughs)

CG: (laughs) Are you?

BD: Yeah. I'm twenty, I'm twenty.

CG: When I first heard Bob Dylan it was, I think, about three years ago in Minneapolis, and at that time you were thinking of being a rock and roll singer weren't you?

BD: Well at that time I was just sort of doin' nothin'. I was there.

CG: Well, you were studying.

BD: I was working, I guess. I was making pretend I was going to school out there. I'd just come there from South Dakota. That was about three years ago?

CG: Yeah?

BD: Yeah, I'd come there from Sioux Falls. That was only about the place you didn't have to go too far to find the Mississippi River. It runs right through the town you know. (laughs).

CG: You've been singing... you've sung now at Gerde's here in town and have you sung at any of the coffee houses?

BD: Yeah, I've sung at the Gaslight. That was a long time ago though. I used to play down in the Wha too. You ever know where that place is?

CG: Yeah, I didn't know you sung there though.

BD: Yeah, I sung down there during the afternoons. I played my harmonica for this guy there who was singing. He used to give me a dollar to play every day with him, from 2 o'clock in the afternoon until 8.30 at night. He gave me a dollar plus a cheeseburger.

CG: Wow, a thin one or a thick one?

BD: I couldn't much tell in those days.

CG: Well, whatever got you off rock 'n roll and on to folk music?

BD: Well, I never really got onto this, they were just sort of, I dunno, I wasn't calling it anything then you know, I wasn't really singing rock 'n roll, I was singing Muddy Waters songs and I was writing songs, and I was singing Woody Guthrie songs and also I sung Hank Williams songs and Johnny Cash, I think.

CG: Yeah, I think the ones that I heard were a couple of the Johnny Cash songs.

BD: Yeah, this one I just sang for you is Hank Williams.

CG: It's a nice song too.

BD: *Lonesome Whistle*.

CG: Heartbreaking.

BD: Yeah.

CG: And you've been writing songs as long as you've been singing.

BD: Well no. Yeah. Actually, I guess you could say that. Are these, ah, these are French ones, yeah?

CG: No, they are healthy cigarettes. They're healthy because they've got a long filter and no tobacco.

BD: That's the kind I need.

CG: And now you're doing a record for Columbia?

BD: Yeah, I made it already. It's coming out next month. Or not next month, yeah, it's coming out in March.

CG: And what's it going to be called?

BD: Ah, *Bob Dylan*, I think.

CG: That's a novel title for a record.

BD: Yeah, it's really strange.

CG: Yeah and hmm this is one of the quickest rises in folk music wouldn't you say?

BD: Yeah, but I really don't think to myself as, a you know, a folk singer, er, folk singer thing, er, because I don't really much play across the country, in any of these places, you know? I'm not on a circuit or anything like that like those other folk singers so ah, I play once in a while you know. But I dunno I like more than just folk music too and I sing more than just folk music. I mean as such, a lot of people they're just folk music, folk music, folk music you know. I like folk music like Hobart Smith stuff an all that but I don't sing much of that and when I do it's probably a modified version of something. Not a modified version, I don't know how to explain it. It's just there's more to it, I think. Old time jazz things you know. Jelly Roll Morton, you know, stuff like that.

CG: Well, what I would like is for you to sing some songs, you know, from different parts of your short history. Short because you're only 20 now.

BD: Yeah, OK. Let's see. I'm looking for one.

CG: He has the, I gather, a small part of his repertoire, pasted to his guitar.

BD: Yeah. Well, this is you know actually, I don't even know some of these songs, this list I put on 'cause other people got it on, you know, and I copied the best songs I could find down here from all these guitar players list. So I don't know a lot of these, you know. It gives me something to do though on stage.

CG: Yeah, like something to look at.

BD: Yeah. I'll sing you, oh, you wanna hear a blues song?

CG: Sure.

BD: This one's called *Fixin' To Die*.

Fixin' To Die

CG: That's a great song. How much of it is yours?
BD: That's ah, I don't know. I can't remember. My hands are cold; it's a pretty cold studio.
CG: It s the coldest studio!
BD: Usually can do this (picking a few notes)**. There, I just wanted to do it once.**
CG: You're a very good friend of John Lee Hookers, aren't you?
BD: Yeah, I'm a friend of his.
CG: Do you sing any of his songs at all?
BD: Well, no I don't sing any of his really. I sing one of Howlin' Wolf's. You wanna hear that one again?
CG: Well, first I wanna ask you, um, why you don't sing any of his because I know you like them.
BD: I play harmonica with him, and I sing with him. But I don't do, sing, any of his songs because, I might sing a version of one of them, but I don't sing any like he does, 'cause I don't think anybody sings any of his songs to tell you the truth. He's a funny guy to sing like.
CG: Hard guy to sing like too.
BD: This is, I'll see if I can find a key here and do this one. I heard this one a long time ago. This is one, I never do it.
CG: This is the Howlin' Wolf song
BD: Yeah.

Smokestack Lightning

BD: You like that?
CG: Yeah, I sure do. You're very brave to try and sing that kind of a howling song.
BD: Yeah, it's Howlin' Wolf.
CG: Yeah. Another of the singers that you're a very good friend of is, I know, Woody Guthrie.
BD: Yeah.
CG: Did you, you said, er, singing his songs, or rather his songs were some of the first ones that you sang.
BD: Yeah.
CG: Which ones did you sing of his?
BD: Well, I sing...
CG: Or which do you like the best perhaps I should say.
BD: Well, which ones you're gonna hear. Here, I'll sing you one, if I get it together here.
CG: In order for Bob to put on his necklace which is what he holds up the mouth harp with, he's gotta take his hat off. Then he puts on the necklace. Then he puts the hat back on.
BD: Yeah.
CG: Then he screws up the necklace so he can put the mouth harp in it. It's a complicated business.
BD: You know, the necklace gotta go round the collar.
CG: Also, in case any of you don't know, in order for Bob to decide what key he's gonna sing in, he gotta, well, first, he decides what key he s gonna sing in and then he's gotta find the mouth harp that's in that key. And, then he's gotta put the mouth harp in the necklace.
BD: Yeah. I'll sing you *Hard Travelin'*. How's that one? Everybody sings it, but he likes that one.

Hard Travelin'

CG: Nice, you started off slow but boy you ended up.
BD: Yeah, that's a thing of mine there.
CG: Tell me about the songs that you've sung, that you've written yourself that you sing.

BD: Oh those are... I don't claim to call them folk songs or anything. I just call them contemporary songs, I guess. You know, there's a lot of people paint, you know. If they've got something that they wanna say, you know, they paint. Or other people write. Well, I just, you know write a song it's the same thing. You wanna hear one?

CG: Why, yes. That's just what I had in mind Bob Dylan. Whatever made you think of that.

BD: Well, let me see. What kind do you wanna hear? I got a new one I wrote.

CG: Yeah. You said you were gonna play some of your new ones for me.

BD: Yeah, I got a new one, er. This one's called, em, Emmett Till. Oh, by the way, the melody here is, excuse me, the melody's, I stole the melody from Len Chandler. An' he's a funny guy. He's a, he's a folk singer guy. He uses a lot of funny chords you know when he plays and he's always getting to, want me, to use some of these chords, you know, trying to teach me new chords all the time. Well, he played me this one. Said don't those chords sound nice? An' I said they sure do, an' so I stole it, stole the whole thing.

CG: That was his first mistake.

BD: Yeah... Naughty tips.

Emmett Till

BD: You like that one?

CG: It's one of the greatest contemporary ballads I've ever heard. It s tremendous.

BD: You think so?

CG: Oh yes!

BD: Thanks!

CG: It's got some lines that are just make you stop breathing, great. Have you sung that for Woody Guthrie?

BD: No. I'm gonna sing that for him next time.

CG: Gonna sing that one for him?

BD: Yeah.

CG: Oh yeah.

BD: I just wrote that one about last week, I think.

CG: Pine song. It makes me very proud. It's uh, what's so magnificent about it to me, is that it doesn't have any sense of being written, you know. It sounds as if it just came out of... it doesn't have any of those little poetic contortions that mess up so many contemporary ballads, you know.

BD: Oh yeah, I try to keep it working.

CG: Yeah, and you sing it so straight. That's fine.

BD: Just wait 'til Len Chandler hears the melody though.

CG: He'll probably be very pleased with what you did to it. What song does he sing to it?

BD: He sings another one he wrote, you know. About some bus driver out in Colorado, that crashed a school bus with 27 kids. That's a good one too. It's a good song.

CG: What other songs are you gonna sing?

BD: You wanna hear another one?

CG: I wanna hear tons more.

BD: OK, I'll sing ya, I never get a chance to sing a lot of, let me sing you just a plain ordinary one.

CG: Fine.

BD: I'll tune this one. It's open E. Oh! I got one, I got two of 'em. I broke my fingernail so it might not be so, it might slip a few times.

Standing On The Highway

BD: You like that?

CG: Yes I do. You know the eight of diamonds is delay, and the ace of spades is death so that sort of goes in with the two roads, doesn't it?
BD: I learned that from the carnival.
CG: From who?
BD: Carnival, I used to travel with the carnival. I used to speak of those things all the time.
CG: Oh. You can read cards too?
BD: Humm, I can't read cards. I really believe in palm reading, but for a bunch of personal things, I don't, personal experiences, I don't believe too much in the cards. I like to think I don't believe too much in the cards, anyhow.
CG: So you go out of your way not to get em read, so you won't believe them. How long were you with the carnival?
BD: I was with the carnival off and on for about six years.
CG: What were you doing?
BD: Oh, just about everything. Uh, I was clean-up boy, I used to be on the main line, on the ferris wheel, uh, do just run rides. I used to do all kinds of stuff like that.
CG: Didn't that interfere with your schooling?
BD: Well, I skipped a bunch of things, and I didn't go to school a bunch of years and I skipped this and I skipped that.
CG: That's what I figured.
BD: All came out even though.
CG: What, you were gonna... you were gonna, sing another blues, you said.
BD: Oh yeah, I'll sing you this one. This is a nice slow one. I learned this... you know Ralph Rensler?
CG: Sure.
BD: I learned this sort of thing from him. A version of this, I got the idea from him. This isn't the blues, but, how much time we got?
CG: Oh, we got half an hour.
BD: Oh, good.

Roll On John

CG: That's a lonesome accompaniment too. Oh my!
BD: You like that one?
CG: It makes you feel even lonelier. How much of that last one was yours by the way?
BD: Well, I dunno, maybe one or two verses.
CG: Where'd the rest of it come from?
BD: Well, like I say, I got the idea for *Roll On John* from Ralph Rensler.
CG: Oh! I see.
BD: And then I got... the rest just sort of fell together. Here's one, I'll bet you'll remember. Yay, I bet you'll know this one.
CG: Take the hat off, put on the necklace, put the hat back on. Nobody's ever seen Bob Dylan without his hat excepting when he's putting on his necklace. Is there... is there a more dignified name for that thing?
BD: What, the, this?
CG: Yeah the brace, what's it called?
BD: Er, harmonica holder.
CG: Oh, I think necklace is better than that.
BD: Yeah, ha, ha. This one here's an old jug band song.

Stealin'

BD: Like that? That's called *Stealin'*.
CG: I figured. You haven't been playing the harmonica too long, have you?

BD: Oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah, yeah. I been playing the harmonica for a long time. I just have never had... couldn't play 'em at the same time. I used to play the smaller Hohners. I never knew harmonica holders existed, the real kind like this. I used to go ahead and play with the coat hanger. That never really held out so good. I used to put tape around it, you know, and then it would hold out pretty good. But then there were smaller harmonicas than these, you know, they're about this far an' I used to put them in my mouth. But I, but I got bad teeth, you know, and some kind of thing back there you know. Maybe there's... I don't know what it was, a filling or something. I don't know what it was in there but it used to magnify.

CG: Oh yes.

BD: Not magnified but magnet, you know. Man, this whole harmonica would go, you know, wham, drop from my mouth like that. So I couldn't hold it onto my teeth very much.

CG: Yeah, it's like, sometimes you get a piece of tin foil in your mouth and it goes wow. It's terrible. But let's not talk about that.

BD: No, I don't want to talk about that either.

CG: At the carnival did you learn songs?

BD: No, I learned how to sing though. That's more important.

CG: Yeah. You made up the songs even then.

BD: Er, actually, I wrote a song once. I'm trying to find, a real good song I wrote. An' it's about this lady I knew in the carnival. An' er, they had a side show, I only, I was, this was, Thomas show, Roy B Thomas shows, and there was, they had a freak show in it, you know, and all the midgets and all that kind of stuff. An' there was one lady in there really bad shape. Like her skin had been all burned when she was a little baby, you know, and it didn't grow right, and so she was like a freak. An' all these people would pay money, you know, to come and see and... er... that really sort of got to me, you know. They'd come and see, and I mean, she was very, she didn't really look like normal, she had this funny kind of skin and they passed her of as the elephant lady. And, er, like she was just burned completely since she was a little baby, er. And... er, it's a funny thing about them: I know how these people think, you know. Like when they wanna sell you stuff, you know, the spectators. And I don't see why people don't buy something, because, you know, like they sell little cards of themselves for, you know, like ten cents, you know. They got a picture on it and it's got some story, you know. And they've very funny thinking, like they get up there like, a lot of them are very smart, you know, because they've had to do this, I mean, still you can't. A lot of them are great people, you know. But like, they got a funny thing in their minds. Like they want to. Here they are on the stage, they wanna make you have two thoughts. Like, they wanna make you think that, er, they don't feel, er, bad about themselves. They want you to think that they just go on living everyday and they don't ever think about their, what's bothering them, they don't ever think about their condition. An' also they wanna make you feel sorry for them, an' they gotta do that two ways you see And er... they do it, a lot of them do it. And... er, it's er. I had a good friend, this woman who was like that, and I wrote a song for her, you know, a long time ago. An' lost it some place. It's just about, just speakin' from first person, like here I am, you know, and sort a like, talkin' to you, and trying, an' it was called, "*Won't You Buy A Postcard*". That's the name of the song I wrote. Can't remember that one though.

CG: There's a lot of circus literature about how freaks don't mind being freaks but it's very hard to believe.

BD: Oh yeah.

CG: You're absolutely right, that they would have to look at it two ways at the same time. Did you manage to get both ways into the song?

BD: Yeah. I lost the song.

CG: I hope you fond it and when you find it sing it for me.

BD: I got a verse here of some... You know Ian and Silvia?

CG: Oh sure. Ian and Silvia are at the Bitter End Club.
BD: I sort of borrowed this from them.
CG: He's looking for a harmonica.
BD: I don't have to take the necklace off; necklace as you call it. You might have heard them do it. This is the same song. I used to do this one.

Makes A Long Time Man Feel Bad

BD: Got sort of... You like that one?
CG: Boy it, when you...
BD: That's got them funny chords in it.
CG: :..really get going there's a tremendous sort of push that you give things that's wild.
BD: Oh, you really think so?
CG: No, I was just talking.
BD: I'll take off my necklace.
CG: Without taking off your hat.
BD: No.
CG: Well, then the thing is you see that...
BD: I'm getting good at this.
CG: Yah. After he takes off the necklace or puts it on he's gotta fluff up the hat again every time.
BD: Yeah. I got it cleaned and blocked last week.
CG: What did you wear on your head? (laughing)
BD: Stetson. You seen me wear that Stetson.
CG: Oh yeah, you were wearing somebody's Stetson.
BD: It was mine. I got that for a present.
CG: So why don't you wear it? 'Cause you like this one better?
BD: I like this one better. It's been with me longer.
CG: What happens when you take it off for any length of time? You go to sleep?
BD: Yeah.
CG: I see.
BD: Or else I'm in the bathroom or somethin'. Well actually just when I go to sleep. I wanted to sing *Baby Please Don 't Go* because I've wanted to hear how that sounded.

Baby Please Don't Go

CG: That's a nice song too. You said that you've written several new songs lately.
BD: Yeah.
CG: You've only sung one of them. You realize that? I know I'm working you very hard for this hour of the morning, but there it is.
BD: Yeah, this really isn't a new one but this is one of the ones. You'll like it. I wrote this one before I got this Columbia Records thing. Just about when I got it, you know. I like New York, but this is a song from one person's angle.

Hard Times In New York Town

CG: That's a very nice song, Bob Dylan. You've been listening to Bob Dylan playing some, playing and singing some of his songs and some of the songs that he's learned from other people. And thank you very, very much for coming down here and working so hard.
BD: It's my pleasure to come down.
CG: When you're rich and famous are you gonna wear the hat too?
BD: Oh, I'm never gonna become rich and famous.
CG: And you're never gonna take off the hat either.

BD: No.

CG: And this has been Folksingers Choice and I'm Cynthia Gooding. I'll be here next week at the same time.

May 1962
Broadside Show, WBAI-FM Radio, New York City, New York

Source: *circulating tape.*

Interviewer: Pete Seeger (PS)

PS: I'd like to see… I'd like to hear some of the songs that Bob Dylan has made up because of all the people I have heard in America, he seems to be the most prolific. I don't… I ????? make the song before breakfast everyday or before supper?

BD: Um… I don't make up the songs like that. Well, sometimes it can go [clears throat] **about two weeks for that making up a song…**

PS: I don't believe it.

BD: Oh, yeah. But then sometimes… well, these are the songs that I sing. I may go two weeks and make it up. I write a lotta stuff. In fact, I wrote five songs last night, but I gave all papers away… someplace. That was in a place called, um, Bitter End. And somewhere I was just about having 'em (left) **on the stage, and I would never sing them any place. There were just for myself and for some other people. That might say, "write a song about that" and I do it, but I don't sorta run around and do with the newspapers like a lot of people do – spend newspapers all around… And pick something up to write a song about it. It is usually right there in my head before I start. That's how I write. I mean it might be a bad approach, but I don't even consider writing songs. I don't even wanna get written it. I don't even consider that I wrote it when I got it done.**

PS: Put it together?

??F: You make up…

BD: Yeah, yeah. I just figure it out that I made it up or that I got it someplace I just sorta [clears throat]**. The song was there before me, before I came along. I just sorta came down and I sorta took it down with a pencil that it was all there before I came around. That how I feel about it.**

PS: That's how I feel about Bob Dylan songs very often that Bob is actually a folk mind. He represents all the people around. And all the ideas current are filtered down and they came out poetry and… For example, one song you wrote about that fellow that was put into an institution. What was his name… White?

BD: Oh yeah, Don. He's dead now.

PS: He's dead now? Umm… For example you put in in one line and say that institutions are overcrowded…

BD: Yeah.

PS: …but I just can't see that appearing on a traditional ballad then before you sang it. And it's precisely the first song that I can think of, a modern song that uses the idea ????? ????? psychology, and the idea of people being afraid of life. And actually of folk song…

??M: Instead of talking about it, let's hear it.

PS: Yeah, could we hear that song?

??F: That's what I wanted to say… Let him get tuned up while we're talking, anyway, we can… We can let him give us an example of how these songs just come to him and blow through him…

PS: Well, I think that this particular song is a ????? and in a sense it is the first psychological song of a modern generation that I've heard.

BD: I took it from a Bonnie Dobson's tune, "Peter Amberley" if the name of it is… [sings *Ballad of Donald White*]

My name is Donald White, you see, I stand before you all.
I was judged by you a murderer and the hangman's knot must fall.
I will die upon the gallows pole when the moon is* RIDING *clear,
And these are my final words that you will ever hear.

[*I left my home in Kansas when I was very young.*
I landed in the old Northwest; Seattle, Washington.
Although I'd a-traveled many miles, I never made a friend,
For I could never get along in life with people that I met.]

If I had some education to give me a decent start,
I might have been a doctor or a master in the arts.
But I used my hands for stealing when I was very young,
And they locked me down in jailhouse cells, that's how my life begun.

Oh, the inmates and the prisoners, I found they were my kind,
It was there inside the bars I found my peace of mind.
But the jails they were too crowded, institutions overflowed,
So they* SET *me loose to walk upon life's* WEARY *tangled road.

And there's danger on the ocean where the salt sea waves split high,
And there's danger on the battlefield where the shells of bullets fly,
And there's danger in this open world were men* FIGHT *to be free,
And for me the greatest danger was in society.

So I asked them to send me back to the institution home.
But they said they were too crowded, for me they had no room.
I got down on my knees and begged, 'Oh, please put me away,'
But they would not listen to my plea or nothing I would say.

And so it was on Christmas eve in the year of '59,
It was on that night I killed a man, I did not try to hide.
The jury found me guilty and I* DON'T *disagree,
For I knew that it would happen if I wasn't put away.

BUT *I'm glad I've had no parents to care for me* AND *cry,*
For now they will never know the horrible death* THAT *I die.
And I'm also glad I've had no friends to see me in disgrace,
For they'll never see that hangman's hood wrapped around my face.

Farewell* TO *the old north woods of which I used to roam,
Farewell* TO *the crowded bars of which have been my home,
Farewell to all you people* THAT *think the worst of me,
I guess you'll feel much better when I'm on that hanging tree.

But there's just one* MORE *question before they kill me dead,
I'm wondering just how much to you I really said
Concerning all the boys that* WALK *a road* JUST *like me,
Are they enemies or victims of your society?

PS: Thank you, Bob Dylan. I'd like to hear you Bob sing another of your songs.
BD: Okay.
PS: You've got a whole box of 'em. Bob, where were you raised?
BD: Um, Gallup, New Mexico and South Dakota.
PS: Holy ????

[cut in the tape]

PS: As we go farther we see less than anywhere else.
BD: We weren't here. ????? anything… I could see that *Emmett Till* was supposed to be here. It's not in *Broadside*, though.
PB: Yeah. That's the one you can place in Broadside.
??F: (unintelligible)
BD: Okay. This is a Len Chandler's tune. There's a funny thing about it. Len… you met Len when he plays and sings he uses a lot of chords, but he's really good. Y'know, he's can really get thing all kind of them… uh… uses fingers all over, but he's good. And he once tried to tell me to use more chords, and to sing a couple of song in minor key. Before I met him I never sung one song in minor key. And um… he taught me these chords and he sang me a song to these chords. I saw him do the chords and I stole it from him. And he heard me do it like that. … He was out of town... He didn't care, though. [sings *The Death of Emmett Till*]

'Twas down in Mississippi no so long ago,
When a young boy from Chicago town* WALKED *through a Southern door.
This boy's* FATEFUL *tragedy* YOU SHOULD ALL *remember well,
The color of his skin was black and his name was Emmett Till.

Some men they dragged him to a barn and there they beat him up.
They said they had a reason, but I* DISREMEBER *what.
They tortured him and did some things too evil to repeat.
There was screaming sounds inside the barn, there was laughing sounds out on the street.

Then they rolled his body down a gulf amidst a blood-red rain
And they threw him in the waters wide to cease his screaming pain.
The reason that they killed him there, and I'm sure it ain't no lie,
Was just for the fun of killin' him and to* SLOWLY WATCH *him die.

And then to stop the United States of yelling for a trial,
Two brothers they confessed that they had killed poor Emmett Till.
But on the jury there were men who helped the brothers commit this awful crime,
And so this trial was a mockery, but nobody seemed to mind.

I saw the morning papers but I could not bear
To see the smiling brothers walkin' down the courthouse stairs.
For the jury found them innocent and the brothers they went free,
While Emmett's body floats the foam of a Jim Crow southern sea.

If you can't speak out against this kind of thing, a crime that's so unjust,
Your eyes are filled with dead men's dirt,* AND *your mind is filled with dust.
Your arms and legs they must be in shackles and chains, and your blood it must refuse to flow,
For you let this human race fall down so God-awful low!

This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man
That this kind of thing still lives today in that ghost-robed Ku Klux Klan.
But if all of us folks that thinks alike, if we gave all we could give,
We could make this great land of ours a greater place to live.

[tape cuts]

PS: Topical songs have been the topic of the program this afternoon. We've just about reached the end of the program. And I'd like Bob Dylan to sing the last song called, *The Answer is Blowin' in the Wind*.

BD: Oh? Yeah.

PS: I'm sorry?

BD: I was going to sing… Oh, is it *The Answer is Blowin' in the Wind*? That one? Oh! Okay…

PS: Because I think this song and… Bob, being a topical song is just filled with poetry that people of all kinds of ways are gonna like.

[Bob Dylan sings *Blowin' in the Wind*.]

How many roads must a man walk down before HE IS CALLED a man?
And how many seas must a white dove sail before HE sleeps in the sand?
And how many times must the cannon balls fly 'fore they're forever banned?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

And how many years can a mountain exist before it's washed IN the sea?
And how many years can some people exist before they're allowed to be free?
And how many times can a man turn his head, AND PRETEND THAT he just doesn't see?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

And how many times must a man look up before he can see the sky?
And how many ears must one man have before he can hear people cry?
And how many deaths will it take till he knows that too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

PS: Thank you Bob Dylan, Gil Turner, Pete Seeger, Sis Cunningham, and Israel Young.

June 1962
Gil Turner Interview For *Sing Out!* (Oct/Nov 1962 issue)

Source: *Broadside* liner notes (BR301, 1963)

There ain't too much I can say about this song except that the answer is blowing in the wind. It ain't in no book or movie or T.V. show or discussion group. Man, it's in the wind – and it's blowing in the wind. Too many of these hip people are telling me where the answer is but, oh, I won't believe that. I still say it's in the wind and just like a restless piece of paper it's got to come down some time... But the only trouble is that no one picks up the answer when it comes down so not too many people get to see and know it... and then it flies away again... I still say that some of the biggest criminals are those that turn their heads away when they see wrong and know it's wrong. I'm only 21 years old and I know that there's been too many wars... You people over 21, you're older and smarter.

September 1962
Edwin Miller Interview, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 19-20.

One of the first magazine interviews with Dylan. Arranged by Billy James, Edwin Miller conducted this interview in June or July 1962 and it was published in the United States in the September 1962 issue of *Seventeen* magazine.

Bob Dylan sings in Washington Square
Quick Take

"What is a folk singer?" asks Bob Dylan, whose intense home-spun ballads sear the mind like a hot iron. His shoulders hunched up, he smokes cigarettes one after another down to the briefest wisp of moist brown tobacco, jiggling his body while he talks. **"They call anybody a folk singer, they don't know what to call him. I sing some blues, some country music, some songs I write myself. My first song was dedicated to Brigitte Bardot. I saw her in a movie when I was fifteen, six years ago."**

When he was ten, he ran away from Minnesota to Chicago. **"I saw a Negro musician playing his guitar on the street, and I went up to him and began accompanying him on the spoons. I used to play the spoons when I was little,"** Bob explains, picking up two teas spoons with one hand, holding them back to back so the bottoms jingle against each other. Three months later he went home. **"My folks didn't seem to mind because I don't remember them saying anything. Maybe I was happy when I was little or I was unhappy, a million other kids were the same way. What difference does it make?"**

That year Bob began to pick on a guitar; by the time he was fifteen, he had taught himself to play the piano, the autoharp, and the harmonica. **"I seem to draw into myself whatever comes my way, and it comes out me. Maybe I'm nothing but all these things I soak up. I don't know. I don't believe that I'm influenced by anybody else's style. If I thought that I'd stop singing."**

After finishing high school, he worked as a roustabout with a traveling carnival. Gradually he turned toward professional singing. In February 1961 he hitchhiked to New York. Appearances in Greenwich Village cabarets spread ripples of excitement through the folk music world, and in September 1961 he was asked to accompany another folk singer who was taping an album for Columbia Records. **"The producer asked me to make an album by myself. There was a violent, angry emotion running through me then; I don't know why. I just played guitar and harmonica – I've got a harmonica holder that goes around my neck so I don't have to hold it – and sang those songs and that was it. He asked me if I wanted to sing any of them over again but I said no. I can't see myself singing the same song twice in a row. That's terrible. I don't work regularly. I don't want to make a lot of money really. I wander around the city a lot, I take the ferry to Staten Island, or I walk down by the river. Or maybe I'll sit around all day with a painter I know. I hate playing night clubs. People don't want to listen to you, they just drink and talk. I can't go out after people. If they want what I've got, they always have to come to me with their hands out and they take from me. That's the way I am."**

January 1963
The Scene Interview, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 289-290.

Ronnie Gilbert (jazz columnist) conducted this interview around January 1st – 3rd. It originally appeared in the English 'performing arts' magazine Scene on January 26 1963.

It really would be a test of the assimilatory powers of Tin Pan Alley if folk music suddenly hit the charts in a big way. How for instance would the men in the sharp suits deal with Bob Dylan, the shambling boy genius of American Folk music?

Dylan does his very best to talk, act, dress and behave as much like a Tennessee mountain man as he can.

When I first met him he was talking vaguely about heading off for Rome, Paris or maybe New York. It worried him very little that he was halfway through the telerecording of the BBC play *Madhouse on Castle St.* and that high-level conferences were being held all over London because of an overtime squabble at the BBC which threatened to take the production time of the play some weeks beyond the time stipulated in Dylan's contract.

"They're paying me two thousand dollars to do this play." said Dylan. **"If I got to stay another three weeks to finish it they'll probably have to pay the same money all over again.**

"But to me two thousand, four thousand, I can't imagine the difference. It's too much money. And what's the money for three whole weeks of time? Three weeks is too long to lose."

Dylan is one of the biggest stars on the American folk circuit...

It was a lunchtime dawn for the tousled boy who opened the door, on which hung a "Do Not Disturb" notice. Thin-faced with a week's growth of boyish hair on his chin, he rubbed a floppy mass of hair out of his eyes and perched out on his bed, feet bare, legs crossed tailor fashion.

His guitar case stood in the centre of the floor, a pile of rolled up shirts erupted from an open suitcase and a large sheepskin jacket in dire need of cleaning lay beside the bed, where it had obviously been dropped the night before.

Dylan is the most exciting white folk and blues singer, the experts say, America has produced. He writes many of his own songs, sings them 'consciously trying to recapture the rude beauty of a southern farmhand musing in melody on his porch' and accompanies himself on guitar and harmonica (fixed round his neck).

Dylan talked like Brando imitating that southern farmhand. **"I'm not in show-business,"** he said. **"Money? I don't know how much I make. Sometimes I ask, sometimes I don't. I don't know what I spend it on, it just falls through holes in my pocket."**

The curtains were still drawn in his room and they remained that way for three hours.

"I don't like singing to anybody but Americans. My songs say things. I sing them for people who know what I'm saying.

"Nowadays I just play at concerts," he said. **"Clubs I don't play at. A few years ago when I needed the money they wouldn't pay me. Now they're writing all the time asking me to play. Sometimes I write back and tell them no, sometimes I just don't answer. But they keep right on asking, offering me percentages of the house and all."**

Dylan dressed to go out to a local cafeteria for lunch with his manager, Mr. Albert Grossman.

Later that afternoon Mr. Grossman and Dylan decided they would finish the TV play, in which Dylan played a guitar-playing hobo.

A week or so after that I caught up with Mr. Grossman and Dylan in London again. Dylan was now wearing a black hat with a colored band and a curvy brim.

In the plush stalls of the new Prince Charles Theatre Dylan slumped in a seat...

February 1963
Skip Weshner Show, New York City, New York

Source: *Circulating tape*

[…tape starts with "Tomorrow Is a Long Time" last stanza…]

Only if she was lyin' by me,
I'd lie in my bed once again.
There's beauty in the silver, singin' river,
There's beauty in the sunrise in the sky,
But none of these and nothing else can MATCH the beauty
That I remember in my true love's eyes.
Yes, and only if my own true love was waitin',
If I could hear her heart a-softly poundin',
Only if she was lyin' by me,
I'd lie in my bed once again.

BD: Geez, that... [sniffs]
SW: That's a pretty song.
BD: Yes.
SW: That uh…
BD: It's a hard one to sing firsthand, though.
SW: Well, I don't ask you, just… What do you call it?
BD: It's called "*Tomorrow's a Long, Long Time*".
SW: Good enough, I'd say..
BD: [laughs] **Well, I guess I should** [pause] **sing, umm, something.**
[laughter in the studio]
SW: Incidentally…
BD: Is it…
SW: …Bobby Dylan plays a Gibson. We always identify guitars on this program.
BD: Oh, yeah. This is a Gibson.
SW: This is what it says up there.
BD: Yeah.
SW: So unless, unless it's a ???? going under false colors I guess it's a Gibson.
BD: Yeah, it's a Gibson. Here's a song for you

[Dylan plays *Masters of War*]

Come you masters of war, you that build all the guns
You that build the death planes, you that build the big bombs
You that hide behind walls, you that hide behind desks
I just want you to know I can see through your masks

I… ***You that never done nothin', but build to destroy***
You play with my world like it's your little toy
You put a gun in my hand **THEN** ***you hide from my eyes***
And you turn and run farther when the fast bullets fly

Like Judas of old you lie and deceive
A world war can be won, you want me to believe
But I see through your eyes and I see through your brain
Like I see through the water that runs down my drain

> ***You fasten the triggers for the others to fire***
> ***Then you set back and watch when the death count gets higher***
> ***You hide in your mansion* WHEN *young people's blood***
> ***Flows out of their bodies and is buried in the mud***
>
> ***You've thrown the worst fear that can ever be hurled***
> ***Fear to bring children into the world***
> ***For threatening my baby unborn and unnamed***
> ***You ain't worth the blood that runs in your veins***
>
> ***How much do I know to talk out of turn***
> ***You might say that I'm young, you might say I'm unlearned***
> ***But there's one thing I know though I'm younger than you***
> ***Even Jesus would never forgive what you do***
>
> ***Let me ask you one question, "Is your money that good?***
> **CAN *it buy you forgiveness? Do you think that it could?"***
> ***I think you will find when your death takes its toll***
> ***All the money you made* DON'T EVER *buy back your soul***
>
> ***And I hope that you die and your death'll come soon***
> ***I'll follow your casket in the pale afternoon***
> ***And I'll watch while you're lowered down to your deathbed***
> ***And I'll stand o'er your grave 'til I'm sure that you're dead***

SW: That's a… pretty strong indictment.
BD: [laughs] **What?**
SW: I say a pretty strong indictment.

SW: Now that Bobby Dylan's found his way here and we've kind of broken the ice an hour ago, so I see he'll have to come back pretty soon. 'Think that'll be possible?
BD: Yeah. It's not snowing next time.
SW: Is it snowing now?
BD: I don't know. I really couldn't tell.
SW: Slushy?
BD: Yeah.
SW: Yeah. Music!

[Bob Dylan plays *Bob Dylan's Blues*]

> ***Well, the Lone Ranger and Tonto ridin' down the line***
> ***Fixin' ev'rybody's troubles, ev'rybody's* BUT *mine***
> ***Somebody musta told 'em I was doin' fine.***
>
> [laughter in the studio]
>
> ***Well, look it here, buddy, you wanna be like me***
> ***Pull out your six-shooter, rob every bank you can see***
> ***Tell the judge I said it was all right.***

BD: All right, I can't…
SW: We've run out of time anyhow. Irving Frank will be on in just a second, New Yorkers

March 1963
Oscar Brand Show, WNBC Radio Studios, New York City, NY

Source: *Circulating tape*

OB: Hello, I'm Oscar Brand and talented young Bob Dylan is my guest today on "World of Folk Music".

OB: Now, one of the most exciting creative forces in the world of folk music is a fine young singer and writer named Bob Dylan. That's D-Y-L-A-N. Right? Right. Bob's with us today and is about to perform a Dylan original.

BD: Thank you, Oscar! And this one's called "*North Country Girl*" and it's dedicated to all the north country girls.

[Bob Dylan plays "Girl from the North Country"]

If you're travelin' in the north country fair,
Where the winds hit heavy on the borderline,
Remember me to one who lives there.
She* WAS ONCE *a true love of mine.

If you go when the snowflakes storm,
When the rivers freeze and summer ends,
MAKE SURE SHE HAS *a coat so warm,*
To keep her from the howlin' winds.

Please see for me if her hair* HANGIN' *long,
If it rolls and flows all down her breast.
Please see for me if her hair hangs long,
That's the way I remember her* THE *best.

I'm a-wonderin' if she remembers me at all.
Many times I've often prayed
In the darkness of my night,
In the brightness of my day.

So if you're travelin' in the north country fair,
Where the winds hit heavy on the borderline,
Remember me to one who lives there.
She* WAS ONCE *a true love of mine.

OB: And all the north country girls thank you, Bob Dylan.

[Social Security administration announcement]

OB: And now once again Mr Bob Dylan and another original called "*Only A Hobo*". A little background Bob?

BD: Well, I guess some people go out in the streets every day, you know. They look into their garage and they see their car and... Other people can go out in the street and see their lilac trees. And other people can go out to their porch and water their plants. And you can also go out in the street an see a hobo.

[Bob Dylan plays "*Only a Hobo*"]

> ***As I was out walking on a corner one day,***
> ***I spied an old hobo, in a doorway he lay.***
> ***His face was all grounded in the cold sidewalk floor***
> ***And I guess he'd been there for the whole night or more.***
>
> **HE WAS *only a hobo, but one more is gone***
> ***Leavin' nobody to sing his sad song***
> ***Leavin' nobody to carry him home***
> **HE WAS o*nly a hobo, but one more is gone***
>
> ***A blanket of newspaper covered his head,***
> ***The* STEP *was his pillow, the street was his bed.***
> ***One look at his face showed the hard road he'd come***
> ***And a fistful of coins showed the money he bummed.***
>
> **HE WAS *only a hobo, but one more is gone***
> ***Leavin' nobody to sing his sad song***
> **AN' *leavin' nobody to carry him home***
> **HE WAS *only a hobo, but one more is gone***
>
> ***Does it take much of a man to see his whole life go down,***
> ***To look up on the world from a hole in the ground,***
> ***To wait for your future like a horse that's gone lame,***
> ***To lie in the gutter and die with no name?***
>
> **HE WAS *only a hobo, but one more is gone***
> ***Leavin' nobody to sing his sad song***
> ***Leavin' nobody to carry him home***
> **HE WAS *only a hobo, but one more is gone***

OB: Bob Dylan with his own song, "*Only a Hobo*". Thanks for coming by Bob.

BD: Thanks for inviting me here today and I also wanna take the opportunity, uh, to express my feelings. Thank you for myself and all my friends who where at your house the other night.

OB: I hope we get together soon.

26 April 1963
Studs Terkel Interview, Chicago, Illinois

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 21-33.

According to Heylin, this show was recorded on April 26th which is borne out during the interview when Terkel says that Dylan played the Bear Club the previous night. The announcer, however, actually states May. Krogsgaard in Twenty Years Of Recording gives May 1st and states that it was broadcast on WFMT Radio at a later date: probably May of that year. Whatever the date, Dylan recorded seven songs from the Wax Museum which was a regular feature on Chicago's WFMT Radio station, between 10 and 11 o'clock every weekday. Terkel was renowned as a social commentator. His shows attracted large audiences and Dylan needed this kind of exposure in the Midwest of the USA at this time. Dylan was interviewed by Studs Terkel (ST) between songs; the recording lasts for approximately one hour.

Transcribed from the circulating tape.

Announcer:
And now we welcome you to the Studs Terkel Wax Museum heard on WFMT each weekday from 10 am to 11. Stud's guest this morning is folksinger and songwriter Bob Dylan, an interview recorded in May of 1963. The program in just a moment.

Bob Dylan plays *Fare Thee Well*

ST: How can we describe you, Bob Dylan, rumpled trousers, curly hair. You know, Bob Shelton of the New York Times speaks of your writing some of the music to songs that you sing 'cause they can't be pigeon holed. The minute you have one characterized it flies away. His lyrics makes a sallow sermon out of Guthries, Woody Guthries, conversational folksay with a dash of Rimbaud's demonic imagery, even a bit of Yevtuchenko's social criticism. Whether his verse is free or rhymed, whether mood is somber, crusading, satiric, subject or fanciful, Mr Dylan's words and melodies spark with the light of an inspired poet. And I think Bob Shelton has something. After having heard you sing a number of songs and a couple of your albums, Bob, where are you from... beginning? Where did you come from?

BD: Well, the beginning, y'know, is there in Minnesota. But that was the beginning before the beginning. The beginning was not till about 3 or 4 years ago... five years ago really, or may be it was even before that.

ST: How did that happen – the five years ago – perhaps we can explore before that too a bit later. How did that five years ago happen and you came to songs – these kind of songs.

BD: I don't know how I come to songs, y'know, but doing what I'm doing, I'm doing, er... I mean, it's not up to me, y'know, I don't really go into myself that deep... I just go ahead and do it, yeah, I was sort of trying to find a place to pound my nails, y'know.

ST: And pounding your nails when you were... Did you hear songs when you were little? How did this come about? Did you hear records of Woody Guthrie because Woody, I know, is a factor in your life?

BD: Oh yeah, Woody, Woody's a big factor, Woody. I feel awful lucky, but, y'know, I feel lucky just to know Woody.

ST: Now you did something. You were in the Midwest and one day you took off and you went to the hospital, New Jersey, to visit Woody. Why'd you do that?

BD: Well, I didn't take off for the hospital there. I was around the country before that and I'd heard of Woody, I knew Woody, I saw Woody once a long, long time ago in

Burbank, California, which, when I was just a little boy – I don't even remember seeing him; I heard him play.

ST: That's interesting, you say when you were a very little boy...

BD: Yeah, it was about... I think it must've been about ten.

ST: Who took you there, your parents?

BD: No, it was my uncle.

ST: Your uncle took you there? And you were very small and that was a memory. You remember though, don't you.

BD: Yeah, I remembered Woody that time.

ST: What was it stuck in your mind?

BD: That... it stuck in my mind that he was Woody and that everybody else that I could see around me was just everybody else. He was Woody.

ST: You mean there was no-one else but one.

BD: Yeah.

ST: And that was he, and I think that if I may venture an opinion there's no-one else but me to hear in you, Bob, and, though you've influenced... well, perhaps this'll come along as we're talking and singing too, now I'm asking about you, and it's hard to separate you from the songs you write and sing. You write most of your songs, don't you?

BD: Yeah, I write them all, now.

ST: What, what makes you write a song? Let's say there's one that I know Pete Seeger sings and Will Holt sings your songs. It's... only way I can describe it is a great tapestry. That's *Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*.

BD: Oh yeah, that one.

ST: Well, before you tackle that, what made you write that?

BD: Well, I'll tell you how I came to write that.

ST: All right.

BD: That's just one of them kinds of songs, that's just one of those I wrote like that... that was, er... I wrote that 'cause, er, y'know, every line in that really is another song, y'know, it couldn't be used as a whole song, every single line, and I wrote that when I didn't figure... I didn't know how many other songs I could write. You see. That was during October of last year and I remember sitting up all night with much people, someplace, and, er, I wanted to get the most down that I knew about into one song as I possibly could. So I wrote that.

ST: It was October that... that night. What... it was during a crisis.

BD: Yeah, that was during the blockade; I guess it's the word.

ST: During Cuba, and you worried. So you put it to song.

BD: Yeah, I was a little worried; I can't say I was, er…

ST: You can't say you were elated.

BD: Yeah, I was a little worried, maybe that's the word, huh.

ST: So you wrote this song?

BD: Mm, mm.

ST: You know, could you sing this song?

BD: You've got it on disc there. I'd appreciate it if you could do it that way.

ST: Which would you prefer. The disc or you doing it?

BD: Yeah, if you take it off the disc. I could sing the song but it takes a long time to sing, and... if you'd like me to sing it, I guess...

ST: I would, oh well, if it isn't...

BD: Well, if you want me to, I guess...

ST: I would like you to sing it. I'll tell you why after you sing it.

BD: All right then.

ST: Because I think this is some song we could talk about. I don't mean so much the content itself as the form, the lyrics, the images. And you call this *Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* and I know people will be listening to it as you sing it.

Bob Dylan plays *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*

ST: Bob, as you sing that one it seems to be the whole world rolled into one. You said earlier before you began to sing it, each one of the lines, each one of the images, could be a song in itself.

BD: It's with the song, every line...

ST: You know why I asked you to sing that live rather than the disc, I had this letter from a kid who's your age, he's about 21, 22. This came about because he was asking, you know, on this programme, wondering about what this new generation is really thinking of: we hear so much and it's interesting. At the very end he says, you know, Americas heard the story of the bright straight A student, fraternity, leading a good-guy Charlie, a young victim of discrimination. But there's a quiet group that remains, one that has no overwhelming crusade that is outwardly to make but one that is uneasily discontent. Thoughtfully restless, young people of this sort may eventually be determined as to future directions. But there's something he said earlier, I can't find the sentence, "Outwardly we seem to be cool, outwardly, but there's a rage inside us you see". Now you were singing that outwardly, very easily and casually since I wanted to see you sing it – but, oh boy, the fire of the words that you sing.

BD: I got a friend who wrote a book called *One Hundred Dollar Misunderstanding*. I don't know if it's been around Chicago, but it's about this straight A college kid, y'know, fraternity guy and, er, a Negro prostitute and it's got two dialogues in the same book. One dialogue in one chapter and the other chapter follows with, er... this is exactly what he's thinking and what he does and the next chapter is her view of him, and then the whole book...

ST: Yeah, I heard of this book...

BD: This guy, Bob Goover wrote it and, er... that would explain a lot too... that's one of the hip, more hip things nowadays, I guess, besides, I mean, it actually comes out and states something that's actually true, you know, that everybody thinks about where, where, I don't know if the feller that wrote in this letter was thinking about the crusades in, er... this guy who wrote it, you can't label him, y'know, he's unlabelable. He's a, that's the word, you understand what I mean.

ST: I follow you. You know, back in the '30's, in the 1930's you know, there were young people feeling passionately, you know, under one label or another, do you see, but they, they were more or less pigeon-holed, but you stand for, it seems, the guy who wrote this letter and the guy who wrote that book – they belong to nobody but themselves but we know something is there, you know, outwardly we say cool, cool... I suppose you have to be that because the chips on the table are so blue.

BD: Well, maybe it's just the time. Now's the time you have to belong to yourself, you know. I think maybe in 1930, from talking with Woody and Pete and some other people that I know there, seems like everything then was good and bad and black and white and, er, easy to see and wherever... you're going to have one or two. When you stand on one side, you know, people are either for you or against you, with you, behind you or whatever you have, y'know. Nowadays, it just... I don't know how it got there really; it doesn't seem so simple – more than two sides, y'know, it's not black and white anymore.

ST: There's something you said earlier, something you wrote – you belong to yourself, that's true, at the same time you can't help but be connected with everybody else. Which I suppose is why you write these songs. Now take this one you've sang, this one that I think will be a classic, this *Hard Rains Gonna Fall*. Even though it may have come out of your feelings about atomic rain, at the same time...

BD: No, no, it wasn't atomic rain. No. Somebody else thought that too.

ST: Well, go ahead.

BD: It's not atomic rain, it's just a hard rain, it's not atomic rain, no. It's not the fall-out rain. It isn't that at all. Well, somebody else, I think, said that someplace, er...

ST: Er, well go ahead. When you say a hard rain, what do you mean?

BD: I just mean some sort of end that's just gotta happen, y'know. It's very easy to see but everybody doesn't really, uh, doesn't seem like, uh, isn't ever looking at... Well, it's bound to happen, you know, it's bound to happen... anything like this, well, although I don't know talking about the hard rain meaning the atomic rain, seems, y'know, like the bomb is a god in some sort of a way. More of a god that people worship but actually you have to be nice to it, y'know, you could, you have to be careful what you say about it, uh, y'know. People work on it. They go... er... six days a week and work on it, you have other people designing it, you know it's a home phone...

ST: And usually they're pretty good people too and everything like that.

BD: Yeah, yeah. I don't believe they're bad people, no. I don't. Well, just like the guy that killed this fellow hitchhiking through Alabama and with the guy that killed him, er, you know, you can ask me...

ST: It might be the start of what you're saying.

BD: Yeah, er, I figure I don't know his name.

ST: We don't know if he did, but he's the fellow who might well have been... might be, yeah.

BD: Yeah, who might be. I'm not even saying that I know who it is, yeah. Even if it's not him, if it's somebody else, y'know, the fellow that actually shot the bullet, you can't, before you say that, y'know, you can't ask me for something more awful. I mean shot in the back and, er, even that guy, y'know, er, when you see something like that, I think so many people before it got to New York, that are good people that maybe are poor, that maybe are a little poor and there are other people telling them, y'know, that er, why they're poor, y'know, and, and, who made it so that they are poor and to take their minds off it they are poor, they have to pick out, they have to pick a...

ST: But you do believe, Bob, in good and evil?

BD: Oh sure, oh yeah.

ST: There is a base of good in... obviously you do from the songs you write.

BD: Yeah. I think the evil doesn't really... evil is the cause you know.

ST: But, you know what I mean, one of the lines that got me, earlier you said things are not quite as simple as they were... **"Executioners faces always well hidden"** – that's one of the lines of your song... the song you sing.

BD: All over the place, it's not, it doesn't...

ST: What is that? Where so? Again this comes out... you know it's so impersonal, it's more impersonal today. But you keep on writing these songs. You don't believe... well, I'm asking you what you don't believe or do believe, you said it's going to happen: what's gonna happen?

BD: Well, I hate to think that anything is gonna happen, but at least I recognize that it could happen that, and, er, what's gonna happen... it's got to be, er... there's gotta be an explosion of some kind. The hard rain is gonna fall is in the last verse when I say "when the pellets of poison are flooding the waters". I mean, all the lies, you know, all the lies that people get told on their radios and their newspapers which, all you have to do is just think for a minute, y'know, try and take peoples brains away, y'know, which maybe's been done already. I dunno, maybe, I hate to think it's been done, but all the lies, which are considered poison, y'know, er...

ST: Well, certainly my generation, let's say, the one... I'm fifty, be fifty-one soon... my generation I think has had it and I think I'm talking about you now and your friends, all your friends who, many of the early 20's... 19, 20, 21... how many feel as you do?

BD: Oh! There's an awful lot of them. Well, I know, that I... well, I dunno, you just ask my friends, er my friends...

ST: I don't mean just your circle... you've traveled a good deal.

BD: Oh, I could tell you something about friends. I've got to tell you about, people that I've growed up with, that I've known, y'know, since I've been born five and, er, the same kind of people I knew when I was ten and twelve. It was a little small town, people, y'know and I grew up with...

ST: This was in Hibbing, Minnesota... iron ore country?

BD: Yeah, and some other places I lived in before I finally split for, y'know, good. But, er, these people were my friends. I went to school with them, I lived with them, I played with them, y'know, I ate with them, y'know, y'know, we did good things, bad things, we went through all kinds of things together... and, er, well, y'know... as I stand here right now, er, the last time I saw any of them was maybe 2 or 3 years ago and, er, y'know, neither me or them has changed, y'know.

ST: What's happened to them?

BD: Well, they still seem to be the same old way, y'know, like when they see me, they heard I was in New York, y'know, and they have words like, er... I can just tell by conversation, little conversation, er, that they still have a feeling that isn't really free, y'know. It's not a free feeling that they have. They still have a feeling tied up where it's tied up in the town, in their parents, in the newspapers that they read which go out to maybe five thousand people, er... they don't have to go out of town, the world's very small; you don't have to really. If you leave one town, in another town's the same thing.

ST: The same thing? So there's a kind of sameness too, that you see... that may not have been...

BD: Yeah. I don't put them down... my road and there's is different, it's not the same, like a lot of 'em are married, maybe some of 'em going to school, y'know, er, some are working, y'know, just working, and, er, they're just in a different... they're still there 'though. That's the whole thing.

ST: But what are they thinking, they want to be...

BD: No, they're not thinking, they're not thinking about the same things I'm thinking about.

ST: They're not thinking what you're thinking?

BD: Yeah, I guess...

ST: You've broken those pellets on the water, haven't you? Those poison pellets on the water where they've maybe hit them too, maybe. Or hasn't it?

BD: Oh yes, it has, it hit me. I just got out of it, y'know, I just got out of it, that's all.

ST: Well, as you're talkin', I think your songs as well as your words right now tell the story of your feelings, Bob, it's more of these one... ah... the... *Don't Think Twice It's All Right*.

BD: Ah, that's one, that's a, yeah.

ST: Now, which one...

BD: Yeah, that's a song I wrote. I wrote that.

ST: Yeah.

BD: Yeah. I lost a nail though. I can't, I don't think I can play...

ST: Ah, that's a difficult one to play.

BD: Not a difficult one to play... just lost this nail here and it's gonna bust off any minute when I might need it, which is why I won't play that.

ST: Well, which is one that, as we're talkin' right now, y'know, about your friends, about yourself.

BD: Oh, you wanna hear one like that.

ST: Yeah, is there a song that, in fact this could be sort of our pattern, I think, you know. You can make the song italicize what you're saying, you see, 'cause pretty much your song and your spoken word go hand in hand... or hand on string. We should point out that this is Friday morning and Bob is at a new place called The Bear, The Bear where L'Arglon once was, is that right, I think it was. You'll be playing there just Friday night. It was last night, then Friday night. No it wasn't. It was just one night. It was last night. However, we hope soon that there'll be a concert of Bob's in Chicago.

Bob sings *Bob Dylan's Dream*

ST: Bob, the song you just sung is so directly related to what we were just talking about. When did you write that song?

BD: Oh, I wrote that a little while ago. I left a verse or two out of that... it sort of slipped my mind.

ST: But, it seems that you can write about any, it seems, any subject under the sun.

BD: Yeah, anything worth thinking about.

ST: You say "worth thinking about". What do you mean?

BD: Well, it means about everything (laughs)**.**

ST: About everything?

BD: Yeah!

ST: You were ten years old when you saw Woody and somehow the memory stuck in your mind and you were in Hibbing, Minnesota and you said, oh, it was about five years ago, really, that you took to the guitar and the singing.

BD: Oh, no. Oh, no. I took, I just five years ago I, no, yeah, about five years ago I just sorta never really did get... go back home, you know. Five, six, four years ago, it was.

ST: Where you been since?

BD: Well, I've been in New York City for the past almost two years. Before that I was just all around the country, er, the Southlands and I was in Mexico for a while.

ST: These are songs of your observations. Like you've been influenced not only by people like Woody, but Blues singers have influenced you.

BD: Oh yeah. Big Joe Williams. I think you might know him. He lives here, I guess.

ST: Yes, he does.

BD: Yeah. He's an old friend of mine.

ST: Big Joe. You sing... you also take songs, pick traditional songs and make them your own.

BD: Well, not any more.

ST: You did that with *Man Of Constant Sorrow*.

BD: Oh yeah, that one.

ST: The white spiritual. You took that and made that something wholly different. Well, that's an art in itself. But now... oh, not anymore you say.

BD: No, no. I used to do that for, y'know, for... I did it you know. I did it. I did all that. I was singing, you know, two, three, three years ago I was singing folk songs, y'know, that I learned. Now I don't sing any of them, anymore.

ST: Oh, you don't. Now, it's all your own compositions.

BD: Yeah, yeah.

ST: Well, has it occurred to you that your own songs might be folk songs? That is, we always had this big argument "what is a folk song" and really, in fact, I think your *Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* certainly would be one, you know, if time was the test.

BD: Yeah, yeah. Time,... should be the test.

ST: What is one... you say any subject... a love song, let's say. Let's say a love song.

BD: Yeah, wanna hear a love song?

ST: Yeah. You see, here you're talkin' about Hard Rain's and this is something that involves all mankind. One you sang about old friends and changes and I could see them. And now boy meets girl. Here's Bob Dylan... boy meets girl.

BD: This is a girl leaves boy.

ST: Girl leaves boy?

BD: **Yeah.**

ST: I won't ask if this is autobiographical.

BD: This is called *Boots Of Spanish Leather*.

ST: *Boots Of Spanish Leather... Gypsy Davey*.

BD: Yeah.

ST: A line from it.

BD: Yeah... (strums)... **No, not because of that... because I always wanted a pair of boots of Spanish leather.**
ST: Ah!

Bob plays *Boots Of Spanish Leather*

ST: There we have a song of lovers farewell, as far, far removed from the June, moon, spoon theme and that way of writing. I suppose it's difficult for you to answer, Bob, what led you to the idea of writing these songs? Was it always with you?
BD: Well, no, er, yes it's always been with me. I can't really say what led me to... I can only say that I look to do a lot of things, y'know... er... er... I'm one of those people that thinks that everybody has certain gifts, y'know, when they're born and, er, get enough trouble trying to find out just what it is. I figured first it was... er... I used to play the guitar when I was ten, y'know, so I figured well maybe my thing is playing the guitar... maybe that's my little gift, y'know, like, like, somebody can make a cake, y'know or somebody else can saw a tree down and, y'know,, and, er, other people write and... nobody's really got the right to say that any of these gifts are any better than any other body's, y'know... 'cause they're all... you get 'em, y'know. That's just the way they're distributed out and everybody gets the same thing. And I'd say that this is exactly what my gift is. Maybe I got a better gift but as of right now I ain't found it.
ST: That's plenty good enough. Yeah, I'm thinking about this little piece of...
BD: I didn't call it a gift, y'know, I didn't call it a gift. That's only my way of trying to explain something that's very hard to explain.
ST: There's a piece you wrote called *My Life In A Stolen Minute*.
BD: Oh yeah.
ST: I assume a great deal of this is autobiographical. Is this all memories?
BD: Yeah. I wrote that for the Town Hall concert I gave in New York City.
ST: Hey, there's Duluth, an iron ore shipping town in Minnesota. That's where you came. And you say **"I wrote my first song about my mother and I titled that Mother and I wrote that fifth grade and teacher gave me B+. I started eleven years old... I stopped once just to catch my breath. Now I don't remember my parents singing too much, at least I don't remember swapping any songs with them"**. And this, of course, is the opposite of what has been a type, let's say, a singer who has learned from parents... hasn't happened at all, there was no connection...
BD: Well, much, no... it's... I never... exactly as it says... I never really did.
ST: Somewhere along the line, man, you were playing guitar when you were ten and the writing of songs came out.
BD: Ahmm, I just write. I wrote for a long time. I've been writing for a long time.
ST: **"I sat in a science class and flunked out for refusing to watch a rabbit die."**
BD: Mmm, that's my college days. I only was there for about four months. I never really was registered, y'know, but I really did get to see it which... If I talk about colleges I ain't talkin' about them because I dislike them for anything people have told me. I was actually there and I see'd what was going on, y'know.
ST: But this is interesting, see, you did go, what, for a year or so?
BD: No I went for about three months.
ST: You went for three months. The reason I ask is, someone'll say "Well, listen to Bob Dylan, he's talkin' mountain talk now, though he's a highly literate and educated man", see.
BD: Oh yeah!
ST: Well, how would you answer that one?
BD: I don't think I am.
ST: How would you answer that when they say that?

BD: I got no answer. If they want to think I'm highly literate, yeah, that's okay by me... I don't...

ST: Now, the feeling is that you didn't have education. I thought the fact that you find it easier for you to... makes it, makes, there's no rule... it's probably just easier for you to express your feelings this way; just the way you're talking. Y'know, I suppose the influence of a great many of the singers...

BD: Woody.

ST: Woody, Woody perhaps. The fact that Woody more than college for three months was the big influence on you...

BD: Oh yeah. Woody Guthrie is perhaps the biggest influence on...

ST: Did Woody, er, did Woody hear you sing some of these songs?

BD: Well. Every time I go sing any songs I wrote for Woody, he always wants to hear *Song For Woody*.

ST: Y'know, there's no harm in that at all. A *Song For Woody*... now here's a case of a tribute of a young and, I use the term advisedly and properly I think, young folk poet in you, Bob Dylan, tribute to an older one who has meant so much to him. Do you remember the words of that Woody song?

BD: Yeah, I do, but I never sing it. I made that a point.

ST: You don't sing it?

BD: I only sing it to Woody. I've recorded it.

ST: I know you recorded it. You couldn't sing that now?

BD: No. I er...

ST: Well, we'll play, we'll play the recording of that at some other date then. But coming back to you, Bob, I asked you of that song deliberately, specifically to sing about daily endeavors, you know, as well as this big mural, this tapestry you put in the song... There's one that I heard you do called *John Brown*. It was not about John Brown, Gods' angry man... it's not... you wrote... you know... we think of John Brown, the original John Brown, saber down while fighting for the freedom of three million enslaved Americans.

BD: Mmm, no, no, that's not the fellow. This is true.

ST: I know, I know, I say. This is the other... now there's another John Brown you sing about, right?

BD: Yeah. That's the one that is a true guy.

ST: This is the true John Brown. Whether it's the John Brown you sing about.

BD: Yeah. The one I sing about is true actually.

ST: Oh, that's the one you knew?

BD: I didn't know him. I knew of him. Yeah, I knew of him.

ST: Do you remember that song? 'Cause that's a powerful one.

BD: Mmm, I guess I do remember...

ST: Will you try that one?

BD: I'll try.

ST: That's a powerful one. I know we're doing this program on the fly because it's, er... because you have to be elsewhere very soon, but, I think, in hearing you sing these songs, Bob, we know more about you as well as there is all of what you're saying too.

Bob sings *John Brown*.

ST: Bob, as you sing that, I think of some song of a wholly different world yet the same, you know, *Johnny I Hardly Knew You*...

BD: Yeah. I heard that one.

ST: Yet you're saying the same thing in your own way. I suppose in this hour program we can have just a few of the songs... How many have you written so far, Bob?

BD: Oh!

ST: In twenty-one years. In your twenty-one years?

BD: The ones I've got... out of the ones I've got, I could tell you, but the ones I actually have, the ones I've written down and the publishers have, must be about seventy five.

ST: Seventy five. What are you doin'? You're writing almost all of the time.

BD: Yeah. I'm writing a book now.

ST: You're writing a book?

BD: Yeah.

ST: And what would the book be, an autobiography?

BD: Yeah, it's about my first week in New York.

ST: What, your first week in New York?

BD: Yeah.

ST: Oh, that's a very funny song, it's a funny sad song that you sing called, it's a talking song isn't it, *New York Town*.

BD: Oh yeah; it's not that kind of, it's not, it's got more to it than that. It's got not too much music in it, except, maybe, y'know, a couple of chapters there... a couple of chapters maybe.

ST: But this book involves what, your observations about the Big City, erm?

BD: No, not even about the Big City. The Big City's got nothing to do with it. It's just about somebody who's come to the end of one road, y'know, and actually knows it's the end of one road and, er, knows there's another road there but doesn't exactly know where it is. He knows he can't go back on this one road.

ST: Er, it's due to a new birth then...

BD: Yeah, sort of.

ST: It was... he... that's one life; that's over and he, he knows there's something else.

BD: He knows there's, well... it's got all kinds of stuff in it which just doesn't add up, y'know, all kinds. It's got thoughts in my head, y'know, all about teachers and school, y'know, and all about hitchhikers around the county, y'know, all about, er, these are friends of mine too, y'know, er, college kids, y'know, going to college... it's got... and these are all people that I knew. Every one of them sort of called a symbol, I guess, maybe called symbol... for all kinds of 'em... people like that. And in New York, New York's like a different world, y'know, especially, I've never been in New York before and I'm still carrying them memories with me, so I decided I oughta write it all down.

ST: So it...

BD: It doesn't really concern... it's not about New York... it's like... it's like, more...

ST: But New York was the reason for your writing, was the cause of the writing it. But it's about, as you say, you're looking... when you say you're looking, you feel a great many of your contemporaries, is that it, fellows like you are looking for that road, they don't know quite what it is. Is that it?

BD: Yeah, that's... the road's very hard to find now. I guess it would be. Maybe sometimes I wish that, er, this was nineteen, er, something else.

ST: Thirty.

BD: Before that, when, seems like, y'know, like when I was talkin' of a nail in a board. Seems like there's a board there and, er, all the nails are pounded in all over the place, y'know, and, er, every new person that comes round that pounds in a nail finds that there's one less space, y'know, and, er, I hope we haven't got to the end of the space yet.

ST: You're looking for a fresh, er fresh piece of wood or something like that... I think.

BD: No. I'm content with the same ol' piece of wood. I just want to... er, find another place to pound in a nail.

ST: Place to pound the nail. Isn't that what most of them are looking for, a place to pound the nail?

BD: Yeah

ST: Well, I think, Bob, in your songs, you're saying this and I think in every one of the songs you write...

BD: Some of the people are the nails.
(Laughter obscures next piece of dialogue about people being nails)

ST: I think you point out that the new Columbia, it's a forthcoming Columbia album, isn't it, has people who are the nails, *Oxford Town* for one, that deals with the Meredith case. You have one called *Masters Of War*. That's a very hard living song.

BD: Yeah, well it deals with the Meredith case but then again it doesn't.

ST: It doesn't. You mean it's beyond that?

BD: Yeah, it's... you know, like music, like my writing and that, is nothing, like this guitar I don't consider sacred, y'know, like this guitar could bust and break. It's pretty old now. I could still get another one, y'know. It's a tool, that's all it is. It's just my tool, it's like anybody else has a tool. Some people saw the trees down, you know or some people spit tacks, y'know and I go to cut the tree down and I cut myself on the saw, y'know. I spit tacks an* I swallow the tacks, y'know. So I've just sort of got this here tool and that's all I use it as. It's a tool. My life is the street where I walk, y'know.

ST: Your life is the street where you walk?

BD: Yeah. That's my life, music... guitar, that's my tool, y'know.

ST: You said *Oxford Town* is not about the Meredith case but more than that.

BD: *Oxford Town* is not about the Meredith case. It's about, yeah, it's about, you could... I wrote that a long, long time... I wrote that, when was it... when that happened, and I could have written that yesterday. It's still the same. Why doesn't somebody investigate soon, y'know, that's a verse in the song. That's the last verse, y'know and, er... somebody had better investigate soon.

ST: It seems that all your songs are about more than the actual event that may have caused it. Do you know what I mean?

BD: I've got a song about *Davey Moore*.

ST: Davey Moore the fighter?

BD: Yeah. The guy that... I'll sing that one for you.

ST: Alright. This was the featherweight... was he featherweight champ? Davey Moore who was killed in the prize ring that night of the three championship fights and there's been this campaign...

BD: But then again, I, I'm not a topical song writer.

ST: I'll ask you about that after *Davey Moore*. Oh not, you're not, you're not a topical song writer?

BD: No. I don't even like that word.

ST: I mean, it's not a song about a certain event.

BD: It's not. No.

ST: Beyond that.

Bob sings *Who Killed Davey Moore*

ST: Oh boy, that's the story of mankind maybe you were talking about?

BD: I don't know about that.

ST: You know this is more than, more than about boxing. Remember way back you said that **"the face of the executioner is always well hidden"**.

BD: Yeah.

ST: Here we come back to it again. Who killed Cock Robin, who killed Davey Moore. I think, Bob Dylan, we have just the touch of you now and I hope this is chapter one involving your visits to Chicago, er, singer, poet, songs and soon there will be a concert of his in town which we'll, of course, keep the audience informed about. What's one way to sign off? Remember you signed on, er, singing the song, sort of travelin'; anything that you feel like, just a signing off. We've heard about maybe half a dozen of the seventy five songs that are out of you and in you and part of you, Bob Dylan.

BD: Sign off, er, let's see... I hate to sing a song for signing off, y'know. I never...

ST: It's not much of a signing off. It's not a question of signing off. It's a question of, say, walking off for the moment. You need not. But I think that what I've been saying about you Bob is merely what some of the others, Bob Shelton of the New York Times, Barry Kittleson of Billboard, more than that, people who've seen you and whose opinions I respect – artists like Pete Seeger and Will Holt who sing your songs er, their way and point out where they come from. And you yourself can't tell exactly where they come from.

BD: No I can't. Pete can do it. Pete can do it.

ST: He can? Well the fact is, the source is there. Bob, thank you and even if you don't sing a song we'll be playing a record to sign you off.

BD: Thank you.

ST: But what is... I don't wanna leave him go just yet... I'm thinking of one, er, of the songs you sing, there's *Tomorrow's A Long Time*, there's, er...

BD: Oh, *Blowin' In The Wind*, there's one. I'll sing you that one.

ST: Oh! Of course! Isn't that one... isn't that a popular song. That's a popular song now I believe. Isn't it?

BD: God, I hope not.

ST: No, by popular I mean in a good sense; a lotta people are singing it, I mean to say.

BD: Oh yeah, that one.

ST: *Blowin' In The Wind*. I think this is one... *Blowin' In The Wind*. This is my way of saying to you right now, so long Bob Dylan, for now. To use a Woody phrase – "Take it easy but take it". I use that as a sign-off... A borrowing from Woody who would have since borrowed it from American history. So *Blowin' Down The Wind*... called *Blowin' In... Blowin' In The Wind*. *Blowin' In The Wind*. This is Bob Dylan. So long Bob.

Bob plays *Blowin' In The Wind*.

May 1963
Interview for *Time* magazine

Source: *Time* magazine, 31 May 1963

LET US NOW PRAISE LITTLE MEN

FOLK SINGERS

There he stands, and who can believe him? Black corduroy cap, green corduroy shirt, blue corduroy pants. Hard-lick guitar, whooping harmonica, skinny little voice. Beardless chin, shaggy sideburns, porcelain pussycat eyes. At 22, he looks 14, and his accent belongs to a jive Nebraskan, or maybe a Brooklyn hillbilly. He is a dime-store philosopher, a drugstore cowboy, a men's room conversationalist. And when he describes his young life, he declares himself dumfounded at the spectacle. **"With my thumb out, my eyes asleep, my hat turned up an' my head turned on,"** says Bob Dylan, **"I's driftin' and learnin' new lessons."**

Something Unique. There is something faintly ridiculous about such a citybilly, yet Dylan is the newest hero of an art that has made a fetish out of authenticity. Last week he was on the road again, having survived a crucial audience of aficionados at the Monterey Folk Festival, competing with such champions of folk-and fakelore as The Weavers, Bill Monroe, Mance Lipscomb, and Peter, Paul and Mary. Nearly everyone sang better, and The Weavers drew more applause. But Bob Dylan was there with three of his songs, and when he sang them, a crowd of 5,200 rewarded him with earnest and ardent applause.

At its very best, his voice sounds as if it were drifting over the walls of a tuberculosis sanitarium—but that's part of the charm. Sometimes he lapses into a scrawny Presleyan growl, and sometimes his voice simply sinks into silence beneath the pile-driver chords he plays on his guitar. But he has something unique to say, and he says it in songs of his own invention that are the best songs of their style since Woody Guthrie's.

Kneed in the Guts. Dylan was born in Duluth but spent most of his youth in Hibbing, Minn. He started playing the guitar when he was ten, he says, adding that **"the only trouble with playin' guitar is that you can't get the cheerleader girls."** He ran away from home at 10, 12, 13, IS, 15½ 17 and 18; he was, as he says, **"caught an' brought back all but once."** In his self-portrait in verse, *My Life in a Stolen Minute*, he recalls the events of his youth:

> **I started smoking at eleven years old an' only stopped once to catch my breath...**
> **I fell hard for an actress girl who kneed me in the guts...**
> **I rode freight trains for kicks**
> **An' got beat up for laughs.**

A couple of years ago, he made a pilgrimage to New York to visit Woody Guthrie, his spiritual leader, lying ill of Huntington's chorea. Seeing Guthrie and sleeping in the subways became his twin pleasures, and he began to sing for money in Greenwich Village coffeehouses. **"Man, I could whip anybody. I was at the high point of my life from seein' Woody. He ain't a folk singer—he's a genius genius genius genius."**

Whole Lost Crowd. By careful standards, Dylan ain't a folk singer either, and he may not even be a genius genius. An atmosphere of the ersatz surrounds him, and his citified fans have an unhappy tendency to drop their g's when praisin' him —but only because they cannot resist imitatin' him.

But his mannerisms matter far less than the value of his honest complaints. He is an advocate of little men, and if he remains one himself, it only enriches the ring of his lyrics—as in his best song, Blowin' in the Wind, an anthem for the whole lost crowd he speaks for:

How many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
How many deaths will it take 'til he knows
That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

27 May 1963 (release date)
The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan Liner Notes (regular & withdrawn)

Source: *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* LP sleeve;
The Telegraph 8 (October 1982), pp. 20-21.

FREE WHEELING BOB DYLAN

Of all the precipitously emergent singers of folk songs in the continuing renascence of that self-assertive tradition, none has equalled Bob Dylan in singularity of impact. As Harry Jackson, a cowboy singer and a painter, has exclaimed: "He's so goddamned real, it's unbelievable!" The irrepressible reality of Bob Dylan is a compound of spontaneity, candour, slicing wit and an uncommonly perceptive eye and ear for the way many of us constrict our capacity for living while a few of us don't.

Not yet twenty-two at the time of this album's release, Dylan is growing at a swift, experience-hungry rate. In these performances, there is already a marked change from his first album ("*Bob Dylan*," BPG62022/SBPG62022 [Stereo]), and here will surely be many further dimensions of Dylan to come. What makes this collection particularly arresting is that it consists in large part of Dylan's own compositions. The resurgence of topical folk songs has become a pervasive part of the folk movement among city singers, but few of the young bards so far have demonstrated a knowledge of the difference between well-intentioned pamphleteering and the creation of a valid musical experience. Dylan has. As the highly critical editors of *Little Sandy Review* have noted, "...right now, he is certainly our finest contemporary folk song writer. Nobody else really ever comes close."

The details of Dylan's biography were summarised in the notes to his first CBS album; but to recapitulate briefly, he was born on May 24, 1941, in Duluth, Minnesota. His experience with adjusting himself to new sights and sounds started early. During his first nineteen years, he lived in Gallup, New Mexico; Cheyenne, South Dakota; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Phillipsburg, Kansas; Hibbing, Minnesota (where he was graduated from high school), and Minneapolis (where he spent a restless six months at the University of Minnesota).

"Everywhere he went," Gil Turner wrote in his article on Dylan in *Sing Out*, "his ears were wide open for the music around him. He listened to blues singers, cowboy singers, pop singers and others—soaking up music styles with an uncanny memory and facility for assimilation. Gradually, his own preferences developed and became more clear, the strongest areas being Negro blues and country music. Among the musicians and singers who influenced him were Hank Williams, Muddy Waters, Jelly Roll Morton, Leadbelly, Manes Lipscombe and Big Joe Williams." And, above all others, Woody Guthrie. At ten he was playing guitar, and by the age of fifteen, Dylan had taught himself piano, harmonica and autoharp.

In February, 1961 Dylan came East, primarily to visit Woody Guthrie at the Greystone Hospital in New Jersey. The visits have continued, and Guthrie has expressed approval of Dylan's first album, being particularly fond of the "*Song to Woody*" in it. By September of 1961, Dylan's singing in Greenwich Village, especially at Gerdes Folk City, had ignited a nucleus of singers and a few critics (notably Bob Shelton of the *New York Times*) into exuberant appreciation of his work. Since then, Dylan has inexorably increased the scope of his American audiences while also performing briefly in London and Rome.

The first of Dylan's songs in this set is *Blowin' in the Wind*. In 1962, Dylan said of the song's background: **"I still say that some of the biggest criminals are those that turn their heads away**

when they see wrong and know it's wrong. I'm only 21 years old and I know that there's been too many wars... You people over 21 should know better." All he prefers to add by way of commentary now is: **"The first way to answer these questions in the song is by asking them. But lots of people have to first find the wind."** On this track, and except when otherwise noted, Dylan is heard alone—accompanying himself on guitar and harmonica.

Girl from the North Country was first conceived by Bob Dylan about three years before he finally wrote it down in December, 1962. **"That often happens,"** he explains. **"I carry a song in my head for a long time and then it comes bursting out."** The song—and Dylan's performance—reflect his particular kind of lyricism. The mood is a fusion of yearning, poignancy and simple appreciation of a beautiful girl. Dylan illuminates all these corners of his vision, but simultaneously retains his bristling sense of self. He's not about to go begging anything from this girl up north.

Masters of War startles Dylan himself. **"I've never really written anything like that before,"** he recalls. **"I don't sing songs which hope people will die, but couldn't help at in this one. The song is a sort of striking out, a reaction to the last straw, a feeling of what can you do?"** The rage (which is as much anguish as it is anger) is a way of catharsis, a way of getting temporary relief from the heavy feeling of impotence that affects many who cannot understand a civilisation which juggles its own means for oblivion and calls that performance an act toward peace.

Down the Highway is a distillation of Dylan's feeling about the blues. **"The way I think about the blues,"** he says, **"comes from what I learned from Big Joe Williams. The blues is more than something to sit home and arrange. What made the real blues singers so great is that they were able to state all the problems they had; but at the same time, they were standing outside of them and could look at them. And in that way, they had them beat. What's depressing today is that many young singers are trying to get inside the blues, forgetting that those older singers used them to get outside their troubles."**

Bob Dylan's Blues was composed spontaneously. It's one of what he calls his **"really off-the-cuff songs, I start with an idea, and then I feel what follows. Best way I can describe this one is that it's sort of like walking by a side street. You gaze in and walk on."**

A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall represents to Dylan a maturation of his feelings on this subject since the earlier and almost as powerful *Let Me Die in My Footsteps*, which is not included here. Unlike most of his song-writing contemporaries among city singers, Dylan doesn't simply make a polemical point in his compositions. As in this song about the psycopathology of peace-through-balance-of-terror, Dylan's images are multiply (and sometimes horrifyingly) evocative. As a result, by transmuting his fierce convictions into what can only be called art, Dylan reaches basic emotions which few political statements or extrapolations of statistics have so far been able to touch. Whether a song or a singer can then convert others it something else again.

"Hard Rain," adds Dylan, **"is a desperate kind of song."** It was written during the Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962 when those who allowed themselves to think of the possible results of the Kennedy-Khrushchev confrontation were chilled by the imminence of oblivion. **"Every line in it,"** says Dylan. **"is actually the start of a whole song. But when I wrote it, I thought I wouldn't have enough time alive so write all those songs so I put all I could into this one."**

Dylan treats *Don't Think Twice, It's Alt Right* differently from most city singers. **"A lot of people,"** he says, **"make it sort of a love song—slow and easy-going. But it isn't a love song.**

It's a statement that maybe you can say to make yourself feel better. It's as if you were talking to yourself. It's a hard song to sing. I can sing it sometimes, but I ain't that good yet. I don't carry myself yet the way that Big Joe Williams, Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly and Lightnin' Hopkins have carried themselves. I hope to be able to someday, but they're older people. I sometimes am able to do it, but it happens, when it happens, unconsciously. You see, in time, with those older singers, music was a tool—a way to live more, a way to make themselves feel better at certain points. As for me, I can make myself feel better some times, but at other times, it's still hard to go to sleep at night." Dylan's accompaniment on this track includes Bruce Langhorne (guitar), George Barnes (bass guitar), Dick Wellstood (piano), Gene Ramey (bass), and Herb Lovelle (drums).

Bob Dylan's Dream is another of his songs which was transported for a time in his mind before being written down. It was initially set off after an all-night conversation between Dylan and Oscar Brown, Jr., in Greenwich Village. **"Oscar,"** says Dylan, **"is a groovy guy and the idea of this came from what we were talking about."** The song slumbered, however, until Dylan went to England in the winter of 1962. There he heard a singer (whose name he recalls as Martin Carthy) perform *Lord Franklin*, and that old melody found a new adapted home in *Bob Dylan's Dream*. The song is a fond looking back at the easy camaraderie and idealism of the young when they are young. There is also in the Dream a wry but sad requiem for the friendships that have evaporated as different routes, geographical and otherwise, are taken.

Of *Oxford Town*, Dylan notes with laughter that **"it's a banjo tune I play on the guitar."** Otherwise, this account of the ordeal of James Meredith speaks grimly for itself.

Talking World War III Blues was about half formulated beforehand and half improvised at the recording session itself. The "talking blues" form is tempting to many young singers because it seems so pliable and yet so simple. However, the simpler a form, the more revealing it is of the essence of the performer. There's no place to hide in the talking blues. Because Bob Dylan is so hugely and quixotically himself, he is able to fill all the space the talking blues affords with unmistakable originality. In this piece, for example, he has singularly distilled the way we all wish away our end, thermo-nuclear or "natural." Or at least, the way we try to.

Corrina, Corrina has been considerably changed by Dylan. **"I'm not one of those guys who goes around changing songs just for the sake of changing them. But I'd never heard *Corrina, Corrina* exactly the way it first was, so that this version lathe way it came out of me."** As he indicates here, Dylan can be tender without being sentimental and his lyricism is laced with unabashed passion. The accompaniment a Dick Wellstood (piano), Howie Collins (guitar), Bruce Langhorne (guitar), Leonard Gaskin (bass) and Herb Lovelle (drums).

Honey, Just Allow Me One More Chance was first heard by Dylan from a recording by a now-dead Texas blues singer. Dylan can only remember that his first name was Henry. **"What especially stayed with me,"** says Dylan, **"was the plea in the title."** Here Dylan distills the buoyant expectancy at the love search.

Unlike some of his contemporaries, Dylan isn't limited to one or two ways of feeling in music. He ran be poignant and mocking, angry and exultant, reflective and whoopingly joyful. The final *I Shall Be Free* is another of Dylan's off-the-cuff songs in which he demonstrates the vividness, unpredictability and cutting edge of his wit.

This album, in sum, is the protean Bob Dylan as of the time of the recording. By the next recording, there will be more new songs and insights and experiences. Dylan can't stop searching and looking and reflecting upon what he sees and hears. **"Anything I can sing,"** he observes, **"I call a song. Anything I can't sing, I call a poem. Anything I can't sing or anything**

that's too long to be a poem, I call a novel. But my novels don't have the usual story-lines. They're about my feelings at a certain place at a certain time."

In addition to his singing and song writing, Dylan is working on three "novels." One is about the week before he first came to New York and his initial week in that city. Another is about South Dakota people he knew. And the third is about New York and a trip from New York to New Orleans.

Throughout everything he writes and sings, there is the surge of a young man looking into as many diverse scenes and people as he can find (**"Every once in a while I got to ramble around"**) and of a man looking into himself. **"The most important thing I know I learned from Woody Guthrie,"** says Dylan. **"I'm my own person. I've got basic common rights—whether I'm here in this country or any other place. I'll never finish saying everything I feel, but I'll be doing my part to make some sense out of the way we're living, and not living, now. All I'm doing is saying what's on my mind the best way I know how. And whatever else you say about me, everything I do and sing and write comes out of me."**

It is this continuing explosion of a total individual, a young man growing free rather then absurd, that makes Bob Dylan so powerful and so personal and so important a singer. As you can bear in these performances.

NAT HENTOFF

*"Outtake" paragraphs from the withdrawn album release follow. The "**********" indicate words trimmed in* The Telegraph.

Solid Rock ("Rocks and Gravel") is partly due to Big Joe Williams. **"I learned one verse of this from him,"** says Dylan, **"and the rest I put together out of lines that seemed to go with the story."** Dylan has known Big Joe Williams from the time he ran away from Minnesota to Chicago at the age of ten. He saw Big Joe Williams on the street and was soon accompanying him with two teaspoons. Dylan was back home within three months, but he wandered again; and his odyssey with Big Joe Williams and other experiences of his young traveling, years will undoubtedly form one of the books he is writing and planning. This performance further demonstrates how forcefully Dylan has been able to assimilate influences and then shape a style and thrust that in compellingly his own. The accompaniment here includes: Bruce Langhorne (guitar), George Barnes (bass guitar), Dick Wellstood (piano), Art Davis (bass), Herb Lovelle (drums).

Different spelling of the song underlined and an extra sentence in italics:

Hard Rain Gonna Fall represents to Dylan a maturation of his feelings on this subject since the earlier ~~(and almost as powerful)~~ *Let Me Die in My Footsteps*~~(, which is not included here)~~. (*Hard Rain* was recorded on December 6, 1962, while *Let Me Die* was cut on April 26 of the same year). Unlike most of his song-writing contemporaries among city singers, Dylan doesn't simply make a polemical point in his compositions. As in this song about the psycopathology of peace-through-balance-of-terror, Dylan's images are multiply (and sometimes horrifyingly) evocative. As a result, by transmuting his fierce convictions into what can only be called art, Dylan reaches basic emotions which few political statements or extrapolations of statistics have so far been able to touch. Whether a song or a singer can then convert others it something else again.

Let Me Die In My Footsteps is, for this listener, one of Dylan's more mesmeric songs. In May, 1962, Dylan wrote:

> **This song has been on my mind for about two years. I was in Kansas. Phillipsburg or Marysville, I think. I was going through some town out there and they were making this bomb shelter right outside town, one of those sort of Coliseum-type things and there were construction workers and everything. I was there for about an hour, just looking at them build and I guess I just wrote the song in my head back then, but I carried it with me for two years until I finally wrote it down.**
>
> **As I watched them building, it struck me sort of funny that they would concentrate so much on digging a hole underground when there were so many other things they should do in life. If nothing else, they could look at the sky, and walk around and live a little bit instead of doing this immoral thing. I guess that it's just that you can lead a lot of people by the hand. They don't even really know what they're scared of.**
>
> **I'd like to say that here is one song that I am really glad I made a record of. I don't consider anything that I write political. But even if I couldn't hardly sing a note, or even if I couldn't stand on my feet, this is one song that people won't have to look at me or even listen closely or even like me, to understand.**

Dylan treats *Don't Think Twice, It's Alt Right* differently from most city singers. **"A lot of people,"** he says, **"make it sort of a love song—slow and easy-going. But it isn't a love song. It's a statement that maybe you can say to make yourself feel better. It's as if you were talking to yourself. It's a hard song to sing. I can sing it sometimes, but I ain't that good yet. I don't carry myself yet the way that Big Joe Williams, Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly and Lightnin' Hopkins have carried themselves. I hope to be able to someday, but they're older people. I sometimes am able to do it, but it happens, when it happens, unconsciously. You see, in time, with those older singers, music was a tool—a way to live more, a way to make themselves feel better at certain points. As for me, I can make myself feel better some times, but at other times, it's still hard to go to sleep at night."** Dylan's accompaniment on this ~~track includes Bruce Langhorne (guitar), George Barnes (bass guitar), Dick Wellstood (piano), Gene Ramey (bass), and Herb Lovelle (drums)~~ is the same as on *Solid Rock*, except that Gene Ramey, the bassist.

Gamblin' Willie is about an uncle of Dylan's. A major po********** pop music tried to get Dylan to make changes in the song so that it might become more commercial. Dylan refused in sho********** could have been asked. **"After all,"** he says, **"this was about a person, and this is the way it was. Every place has its own Willies, and I'm sure everybody knows some Gamblin' Willies."** On this track and on *Talkin' John Birch Society Blues*, Dylan is accompanied by bassist Rill Lee.

The wry puncturing of contemporary demonology in *Talkin' John Birch Society Blues* requires no additional commentary.

Late August 1963
Sidney Fields Interview, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 291-292.

This interview originally appeared in the *New York Mirror* of December 9, 1963.

ONLY HUMAN
DRIFTIN' AND LEARNIN'

All things that once churned inside Bob Dylan when he was knocking about America are pouring from him now.

These past six years he's written over a hundred songs, with rare perception, covering everything from nuclear fallout and integration to lover's lament or his own loneliness.

Some like *Hard Rains Are Going To Fall* are in his current best-selling album, *The Free Wheelin' Bob Dylan*. Others, like *Blowin' In The Wind* and *Don't Think Twice, It's All Right* are hits by Peter, Paul And Mary, and Bobby Darin.

Dylan is twenty-one, wears faded dungarees, uncut hair, an assumed hillbilly accent, and has been on and off resident in Greenwich Village (where else?) for over two years. Before that he was trying to cover every highroad and by way of the country.

"The itch to move, to see, and hear, was always there," he says. **"But I didn't want to see the atomic bathrooms and electronic bedrooms and souped up can-openers; I wanted to watch and feel the people and the dust and ditches and the fields and fences."**

His parents and a younger brother are still in Hibbing, Minnesota, where he first tried to leave when he was ten, with his guitar and harmonica. He got 900 miles away before police picked him up and sent him home by train.

"I got walloped, but not hard enough to make me stay," Dylan says, **"I took off again at 12 and five times after that, getting caught and walloped each time. But when I was 18 I made it."**

He touched about every state, trying to earn his keep by telling stories of what he saw, but eating more regularly when he trimmed hedges, mowed lawns, or any work he could get. His first New York job earned him $2 for a one-night stand in a village coffee joint. When another folk singer made a record for Columbia he was asked to accompany her on the harmonica. Columbia signed him. He made his first album and was given a Town Hall debut.

The program notes about himself came from *My Life In A Stolen Minute* a long autobiographical poem. Part of it goes: **"With my thumb out, my eyes asleep, my hat turned up an' my head turned on, I'se driftin' an' learnin' new lessons."**

His voice is small, but telling, and what he sings in his own penetrating way has all the bright rhythm of a poet aware of the world.

Since his Town Hall appearance he has appeared at colleges and folk festivals, coast-to-coast, and in London and Rome. He has been on the *Ed Sullivan Show*; on stage at Carnegie Hall. He

gives a second Carnegie Hall concert next October 27. Of late he has shown up on the same stage with Joan Baez in "impromptu-on-purpose."

After his first album, titled simply *Bob Dylan*, he concluded **"That's not me. There was only a couple of my stories on it."** He was happier with his second: **"I wrote all the stories except for one or two songs."**

His songs always start as stories. When he was on the road he became a fine teller of other people's stories. But he quit that.

"Because Dickens and Dostoyevsky and Woody Guthrie were telling their stories much better than I ever could," Bob Dylan says, **"I decided to stick to my own mind."**

4 November 1963
Andrea Svedburg Interview, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 35-37

Seeking favorable publicity for Dylan, Billy James and John Kurland of Columbia Records approached *Newsweek* to run a cover story. Their researcher, Andrea Svedburg, was appointed to this task. She interviewed Dylan on October 23rd or 24th 1963. Her article, published on November 4th turned out to be anything other than good publicity for Dylan. To use Robert Shelton's words:

> "The story, on November 4, 1963, turned into a hatchet job that threw Dylan into depression, ruptured his contact with his family, interrupted his relationship with Billy James for almost two years, drove Grossman further into distrust of the Press, embarrassed Newsweek, and led to a new era of tortuous relations between the musician and the media. Dylan turned from an accessible subject into a cagey game-player who toyed with interview questions, who developed the outrageous 'anti-interview', saying shocking, even deleterious things, things he often didn't believe. He became dubious that even the emerging underground press could understand him... The article was illustrated with a photo of Dylan recording, above the caption 'Bob Dylan: What's in a Name?' The imputation that he had stolen *Blowin' In The Wind* was the Coup de Grace."

The *Newsweek* article angered Dylan intensely. To quote Spitz, Dylan was "feeling deflated and very pissed-off". This experience certainly affected his subsequent relationship with the Press and helped to develop his "party-game" approach to future interviews and press-conferences. Dylan did not publicly retaliate but he did respond with *Epitaph 9* of *Eleven Outlined Epitaphs*, written as liner notes to accompany *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. It is also believed that the last verse of *Restless Farewell* was a direct response to the *Newsweek* article:

> **"Oh a false clock tries to tick out my time**
> **To disgrace, distract and bother me.**
> **And the dirt of gossip blows into my face,**
> **And the dust of rumors covers me."**

I Am My Words

He popped out of nowhere, another unknown, unscrubbed face in Greenwich Village, and now, only two years later, he sits in the pantheon of the folk-music movement. His name is Bob Dylan, he is 22 years old, and his bewildered brown hair trails off into uneven sideburns. He sticks his skinny frame into blue jeans and wrinkled shirts, and he talks hip talk, punctuated with obscenities. His singing voice scratches and shouts so jarringly that his success, at first, seems incredible. Yet his knack for stirring audiences is unmistakable, and it stems, mainly, from the words of the some 200 songs he has written, simple words that pounce upon the obvious – the inequalities, dangers and deceits of the 1960's – and hammer them home.

> **How many years can some people exist**
> **Before they're allowed to be free?...**
> **The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,**
> **The answer is blowin' in the wind...**

His *Blowin' in the Wind* is a huge hit, and his concerts – last week at Town Hall in Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall – draw sellout crowds, mostly high-school and college students to whom Dylan is practically a religion. He has suffered; he has been hung up, man, without bread, without a chick, with twisted wires growing inside him. His audiences share his pain, and seem jealous because they grew up in conventional homes and conventional schools.

The ironic thing is that Bob Dylan, too, grew up in a conventional home, and went to conventional schools. He shrouds his past in contradictions, but he is the elder son of a Hibbing, Minn. appliance dealer named Abe Zimmerman, and, as Robert Zimmerman, he attended Hibbing High School, then briefly the University of Minnesota.

'Dig It, Man': Dylan admits he was born in Duluth and raised in Hibbing, but as he sat in a New York restaurant one day last week, after a recording session with Columbia Records, he denied that Bob Dylan was ever Bobby Zimmerman. **"Dig my draft card, man,"** he said. **"Bob Dylan"**. (He changed his name legally on Aug. 9, 1962)

His parents? **"I don't know my parents"**, he said. **"They don't know me. I've lost contact with them for years."**

A few blocks away, in one of New York's motor inns, Mr. and Mrs. Abe Zimmerman of Hibbing, Minn., were looking forward to seeing their son sing at Carnegie Hall. Bobby had paid their way east and had sent them tickets, they had told friends in Minnesota. "He was home a few days in August", said David Zimmerman, Bobby's 17 year-old brother. "We were kind of close. We're both kind of ambitious. When we set out to do something, we usually get it done. He set out to become what he is."

"My past is so complicated you wouldn't believe it, man," said Dylan.

"Bobby is hard to understand," said David Zimmerman.

The Image: Why Dylan – he picked the name in admiration for Dylan Thomas – should bother to deny his past is a mystery. Perhaps he feels it would spoil the image he works so hard to cultivate – with his dress, with his talk, with the deliberately atrocious grammar and pronunciation in his songs. He says he hates the commercial side of folk music, but he has two agents who hover about him, guarding his words and fattening his contracts. He scorn's the press's interest in him, but he wants to know how long a story about him will run and if there will be a photograph. He is a complicated young man, surrounded now by complicated rumors.

There is even a rumor circulating that Dylan did not write *Blowin' in the Wind*, that it was written by a Millburn (N. J.) High student named Loire Wyatt, who sold it to the singer. Dylan says he did write the song and Wyatt denies authorship, but several Millburn students claim they heard the song from Wyatt before Dylan ever sang it.

Dylan says he is writing a book that will explain everything. But, he insists, the explanations are irrelevant. **"I am my words,"** he says. Maybe this is enough. "There's a lot about Bobby I don't understand," says Joan Baez, who plays princess to his prince among young folk fans. "But I don't care. I understand his words. That's all that matters."

13 December 1963
Bob Dylan's speech at the NECLC Dinner

Source: *Internet*

The National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (NECLC), founded in 1951 and known for many years simply as the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (ECLC), annually held a Bill of Rights Dinner which gathered together members and friends of the organization and provided a setting for the presentation of the group's Tom Paine Award, given once yearly since 1958 in recognition of distinguished service in the fight for civil liberty. The recipient of the 1963 award was singer/songwriter Bob Dylan who accepted the award on December 13 at the Dinner in New York, which also featured noted author James Baldwin.

TRANSCRIPT OF BOB DYLAN'S REMARKS AT THE BILL OF RIGHTS DINNER
at the Americana Hotel on December 13th 1963

I haven't got any guitar, I can talk though. I want to thank you for the Tom Paine award in behalf everybody that went down to Cuba. First of all because they're all young and it's took me a long time to get young and now I consider myself young. And I'm proud of it. I'm proud that I'm young. And I only wish that all you people who are sitting out here today or tonight weren't here and I could see all kinds of faces with hair on their head – and everything like that, everything leading to youngness, celebrating the anniversary when we overthrew the House Un-American Activities just yesterday, – Because you people should be at the beach. You should be out there and you should be swimming and you should be just relaxing in the time you have to relax. (Laughter) **It is not an old peoples' world. It is not an old peoples' world. It has nothing to do with old people. Old people when their hair grows out, they should go out.** (Laughter) **And I look down to see the people that are governing me and making my rules – and they haven't got any hair on their head – I get very uptight about it.** (Laughter)

And they talk about Negroes, and they talk about black and white. And they talk about colors of red and blue and yellow. Man, I just don't see any colors at all when I look out. I don't see any colors at all and if people have taught through the years to look at colors – I've read history books, I've never seen one history book that tells how anybody feels. I've found facts about our history, I've found out what people know about what goes on but I never found anything about anybody feels about anything happens. It's all just plain facts. And it don't help me one little bit to look back.

I wish sometimes I could have come in here in the 1930's like my first idol – used to have an idol, Woody Guthrie, who came in the 1930's (Applause)**. But it has sure changed in the time Woody's been here and the time I've been here. It's not that easy any more. People seem to have more fears.**

I get different presents from people that I play for and they bring presents to me backstage – very weird, weird presents – presents that I couldn't buy. They buy – they bring me presents that – I've got George Lincoln Rockwell's tie clip that somebody robbed for me. (Laughter) **I have General Walker's car trunk keys – keys to his trunk that somebody robbed for me. Now these are my presents. I have fallout shelter signs that people robbed for me from Philadelphia and these are the little signs. There's no black and white, left and right to me anymore; there's only up and down and down is very close to the ground. And I'm trying to go up without thinking about anything trivial such as politics. They has got nothing to do with it. I'm thinking about the general people and when they get hurt.**

I want to accept this award, the Tom Paine Award, from the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. I want to accept it in my name but I'm not really accepting it in my name and I'm

not accepting it in any kind of group's name, any Negro group or any other kind of group. There are Negroes – I was on the march on Washington up on the platform and I looked around at all the Negroes there and I didn't see any Negroes that looked like none of my friends. My friends don't wear suits. My friends don't have to wear suits. My friends don't have to wear any kind of thing to prove that they're respectable Negroes. My friends are my friends, and they're kind, gentle people if they're my friends. And I'm not going to try to push nothing over. So, I accept this reward – not reward, (Laughter) **award in behalf of Phillip Luce who led the group to Cuba which all people should go down to Cuba. I don't see why anybody can't go to Cuba. I don't see what's going to hurt by going any place. I don't know what's going to hurt anybody's eyes to see anything. On the other hand, Phillip is a friend of mine who went to Cuba. I'll stand up and to get uncompromisable about it, which I have to be to be honest, I just got to be, as I got to admit that the man who shot President Kennedy, Lee Oswald, I don't know exactly where --what he thought he was doing, but I got to admit honestly that I too – I saw some of myself in him. I don't think it would have gone – I don't think it could go that far. But I got to stand up and say I saw things that he felt, in me – not to go that far and shoot.** (Boos and hisses) **You can boo but booing's got nothing to do with it. It's a – I just a – I've got to tell you, man, it's Bill of Rights is free speech and I just want to admit that I accept this Tom Paine Award in behalf of James Forman of the Students Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and on behalf of the people who went to Cuba.** (Boos and Applause)

25 February 1964
Steve Allen Interview, Hollywood California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 979-980.

An early television appearance by Bob, this time on the *Steve Allen Show*, broadcast nationally from the Hollywood studios of CBS. The show was recorded on February 25th 1964. Transcribed from an audio tape of the broadcast.

The introduction is from Allen:

This young man was born in Duluth, Minnesota, but spent most of his early years in Hibbing. He started playing the guitar when he was just a child often but, er, he says it didn't do him too much good in High School. He says the only trouble with playing guitars is you don't get the cheer-leader girls. He is now one of the most sought after folk artists of the present day. I'll show you two of his albums. Here is one title, as you can see, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* and he's one of those performers who seems to somehow be taken to the hearts of the young people who see him... the High School age, College age people. They somehow seem to identify with him or with parts of him or part of what he does. Here's another one of his albums titled, as you see, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. Bob Dylan. I'll introduce you to this young man, this very interesting young man, personally. We'll come back in 120 seconds.

...I thought it would be instructive, in this instance, to tell you a bit about this young man. I've already told you he's from Minnesota. He's primarily a poet. He's a very popular entertainer now, but I think one of the reasons for his popularity is that he has the mind of a poet. I'm going to quote a few words about him by Ralph Gleason, music – jazz critic. Mr. Gleason is not an easy man to please, but he says this about Bob Dylan... he talks about a particular concert up in Berkley, California area, a concert in which Joan Baez appeared with Bob Dylan, he says together the two sang a group of songs including *With God On Our Side* and *Blowin' In The Wind* and for the first time the true message of the latter song came through to this listener. This makes it's own rules and Dylan is a genius, a singing conscience and moral referee as well as a preacher... he's also a very embarrassed young man. It's always embarrassing to sit there with your feet in cement while somebody compliments you either casually or lavishly but, I've been reading a number of stories about Bob this afternoon and they are all of that order... a comment in *Billboard*, the trade publication, says Dylan's poetry is born of a painful awareness of the tragedy that underlies the contemporary human condition.

SA: Bob, you sing partly your own songs, partly other people's. Where do you get your material?
BD: They're all mine now.
SA: You sing all your own material... and how long have you been writing your own music?
BD: Er, about two years.
SA: Just two years?
BD: And seven years before that when I quit writing and I started copying for about two or three years between.
SA: What do you mean by the word 'copying' in this context?
BD: Well, I quit writing and started singing, you know, er... what other people had written.
SA: Oh, I see. I think it might be interesting for the audience if I quote a word or two of one of your poems. I'm reading from the back of the jacket from one of Bob's albums – The town I was born in holds no memories but for the honking foghorns, the rainy mist and the rocky cliffs. I'd carried no feelings up past the Lake Superior hills. The town I grew up in is the one that's left me with my legacy visions. It was not a rich town. My parents

were not rich. It was not a poor town. My parents were not poor. It was a dying town... it was a dying town. The train line cuts the ground showing where the fathers and mothers of me and my friends had picked up and moved from North Hibbing to South Hibbing. Old North Hibbing deserted, already dead. Its old stone court-house decaying in the wind – long abandoned, windows crashed out. The breadth of its broken walls being smothered in clinging moss. Just a few lines of poetry written by Bob Dylan. Bob, what are you going to sing for us?

BD: A song that's on there – *The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll*.

SA: *The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll*. What's the story of this song?

BD: The story I took out of the newspaper and I only changed the words. It's, er...

SA: Changed the words?

BD: Yeah, changed the words

SA: I don't understand. You took a story out of the newspaper...

BD: It's a true story.

SA: Oh. I see.

BD: And it happened in Maryland.

SA: What words did you change? I still don't know what you mean by that.

BD: Well, I changed, er... the reporters view into... I used it I used it for something I wanted to say, er, and I used his view, the Maryland reporters view to get at what I wanted to say and turn it that way. And I used a true story, that's all. I could have used a made-up story.

SA: Was the story... I mean the actual incident... did it concern someone named *Hattie Carroll*?

BD: Yeah.

SA: I see. Do you want to tell us about that incident or would you rather do that by means of the song?

BD: Well, I could tell you about it I could sing about it I could do anything. If I talked about it, I would talk about it for a very long time... if I sang about it, it would only take as long as the song lasts.

SA: I see. Well, I imagine the song tells its own story. Here it is.

Bob sings *The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll*

SA: Thank you very much Bob Dylan; the party continues in 120 seconds.

Mr. Allen was not exactly impressed. His views on the show – "He sang so very softly and his attitude was so off-hand and unprofessional that he seemed rather more a mystery to our studio audience than as a blazing new talent."

March 1964
Chris Welles Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 773-775.

This interview was conducted some time during March 1964 and appeared in the April 10 1964 issue of *Life*. To quote Heylin (*A Life In Stolen Moments*) "Chris Welles, after repeated efforts, finally manages to get Dylan to sit down for a five page profile". Most of those five pages are photos and their captions.

THE ANGRY YOUNG FOLK SINGER

Bob Dylan, who is quite possibly your children's favorite singer, is not exactly the image of the clean-cut boy you'd like your daughter to bring home to dinner. He is sloppy, disheveled, unshaven. He talks angrily and irreverently. But he is the most important writer of folk songs in the last 20 years. His biting protests against poverty, injustice, segregation and war are revitalizing a folk movement which was bogging down in dying cowboys and blue-tail flies. And Dylan has become one of the three or four best-selling folk singers around.

Unlike the new crop of well-scrubbed collegiate folk groups, Dylan scorns clothes, baths and razors. **"I come on stage the same way I go anywhere,"** he says. **"I mean, are all those people paying to see me look neat?"**

Dylan, who is 22, took up folk singing after he flunked out of college four years ago. He bummed around the country, picked up a guitar along the way, began singing his songs in bars and coffeehouses. Last year's Newport Festival made him famous and now he does not know how to cope with success. **"My records are selling and I'm making money,"** he says. **"But it makes me think I'm not doing right. Man, I'm going through a weird time."**

'I ain't scared to step out, man'

"The teachers in school taught me everything was fine," says Bob Dylan. **"That was the accepted thing to think. It was in all the books. But it ain't fine, man. There are so many lies that have been told, so many things that are kept back. Kids have a feeling like me, but they ain't hearin' it no place. They're scared to step out. But I ain't scared to do it, man."**

Dylan's first exposure to things not being fine was in his home town of Hibbing, Minn. Having prospered from its iron mines, Hibbing fell into decay and neglect as the rich ores gave out. **"I was born with death around me,"** Dylan says. **"I was raised in a town that was dying. There weren't no need for that town to die. It was a perfectly valid town."**

He sings about a town like Hibbing in *North Country Blues*, the lament of a mother:

> The summer is gone
> The ground's turning cold
> The stars one by one they're a-foldin'
> My children will go, as soon as they grow
> Well, there ain't nothing here now to hold them

After he left Hibbing and wandered around the country, Dylan was drawn to songs written by Woody Guthrie. **"Woody was my god,"** he says. **"I was writing like I thought Woody would write."**

Three years ago Dylan came to New York to visit Guthrie who is ill with Parkinson's disease in a Brooklyn hospital. **"After I talked to him I realized he wasn't a god,"** says Dylan. **"He was a man and he taught me that men have reasons for what they do. Now I just write what I feel."**

Though he has long since ceased imitating Guthrie, Dylan still has Woody's freewheeling outspokenness and concern with social injustices. His villains are the people he calls the "*Masters of War*" who profit from the manufacture of weapons; the hypocrites who claim that "with God on our side" they can justify whatever evil they want to commit; the professional anti-communists; the segregationists who caused the deaths of people like Medgar Evers, Hattie Carroll and Emmett Till. Dylan sings:

While Emmett 's body floats the foam
Of a Jim Crow Southern sea
If you can't speak out against this thing
A crime that's so unjust
Your eyes are filled with dead men's dirt
Your mind is filled with dust.

Dylan hits at man's brutality in *Who Killed Davey Moore?* – the boxer who last year died of brain damage after a fight. **"Why did he die and what's the reason for?"** the song doggedly asks crowd, referee, press, manager, who slough off the blame. Finally the song asks Moore's opponent, who shrugs:

I hit him, yes, it's true
But that 's what I was paid to do.
Don't say murder, don't say kill It was
Destiny, it was God's will.

Dylan has been more and more caught up in writing verses which he never expects to sing. The back of his third album is covered with free-verse poems called 11 Outlined Epitaphs. He is working on two plays and a book, "a rambling travelogue," which will be published by Macmillan. He recently traveled gathering material for his book and his songs. **"We hit 46 pool halls from Augusta, Ga. to Berkeley, Calif. We talked to people in bars, miners-talking to people – that's where it's at, man."**

In his songs Dylan talks most compellingly to young people. They are drawn by his rhythmic blues style, his rough voice, the stories his verses tell. But there is something more that attracts them, a feeling that Dylan is on their side. This comes out in his song *The Times They Are A-Changin'*:

Come Mothers and Fathers throughout the land
And don't criticise what you can't understand
Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command
Your old rules are rapidly ageing.
Please get out on a new one if you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'.

16 May 1964
Max Jones interview for *Melody Maker*, London, England

Source: *NME Originals: Bob Dylan and the Folk Rock Boom 1964-1974*, p. 8.

Page 12—MELODY MAKER, May 16, 1964

Bob Dylan.. 'Most important folk singer around to-day'

BOB DYLAN has been described as the most important folk singer today.

Not, that is, if we look for folk singers to tell us something, from a personal viewpoint, about what is happening today, as well as to sing the epics of other times.

The trusty old songs are all very well, but you need a change of diet. With Bob Dylan you get it His repertoire is stuffed with original material which gives a really individual slant on the way we are living and, as he puts it, not living.

"All I'm doing is saying what's on my mind the best way I know how," Dylan explains. **"And whatever else you say about me, everything I do and sing and write comes out of me."**

Dylan certainly says what's on his mind, and though his inspiration quite obviously came from the great Woody Guthrie, he composes and delivers his songs in his own way.

The influence of Guthrie goes deep. When Dylan does a talking blues, you hear it often in voice and guitar. The sardonic asides and introductions remind me of Woody, and so do the completely outspoken lyrics of many of his ballads.

I don't know what songs he'll be doing on his live British shows. But they are bound to he rich.

He lashes out hard in such songs as "*Masters of war*" and "*With God on our side*", enters fantasy in "*Hard rain*," and is amusingly topical.—Max Jones.

17 May 1964
Max Jones Interview, London. England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 39-42

This interview took place at lunchtime on May 17th 1964 in Dylan's Mayfair hotel room. This was the day of the Royal Festival Hall concert. The interview appeared in Melody Maker on May 23rd 1964. Max Jones had met Dylan on his previous trip to the U.K. and was afforded better treatment by Dylan than other contemporary journalists, some of whom were to receive fairly dismissive treatment from Dylan.

BOB DYLAN TALKS TO MAX JONES

One lunchtime, before his sell-out concert at the Royal Festival Hall, I called to see Bob Dylan. A twenty-three year old American singer, guitarist, harmonica player and writer of songs which go a few fathoms deeper than the 'yeah, yeah, yeah' stage, received me with cordiality and a bottle of Beaujolais. It was incongruous, in view of the blistering social criticism in many of his songs, to meet him in the gentle surroundings of a hotel in Mayfair. Particularly as he was dressed in jeans and boots and leather jacket. He was aware of the incongruity, we discussed it, his singing and songwriting, plays, books and the British folk Scene. This is some of what he had to say...

I don't know anything about the folk scene here, nothing at all. I went to one of the clubs when I was in London in 1962 but didn't stop long. I know some of your writers and actors. Who in particular? Ewan McColl. I like his writing very much.

I like writing and I like writers. Len Chandler, a friend of mine who writes, he's fine. I might sing some of his songs one of these days. But I don't know all of the words to them. At the moment, I only sing my own songs. And a few traditional things.

You ask if I have any difficulty producing songs. You know, they come up and stay in my mind sometimes – sometimes a long time. I just write them out when the right time comes. The words come first. Then I fit a tune or just strum the chords. Really I'm not a tune writer. The songs for me are very confining, or something. I'm not writing that many songs.

I've written a lot of things with no structure, written them only because I like to sing them. '*Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*'... I wrote the words of it on a piece of paper. But there was just no tune that really fit to it, so I just sort of play chords without a tune. If all this comes under the heading of a definition, then I don't care really to define what I do. Other people seem to have a hard time doing that.

Writing, yes I do like writing. That's mainly what I do, is just writing... you know, it keeps me awake. I've written a play, well, I'm working on it when I have time, but I haven't got it down yet. I've written a couple already but I'm not satisfied with them. They haven't been performed. Do I want them to be? Not right now.

This one I'm writing, I can't tell you much about it. it's like some kind of maze. Just a bunch of people who play act, really act, try to act you know, for each other, talk to you, about you, above you, below you.

Meanwhile, they're all out trying to survive by being concerned about things, having something to do with people. A lot of it is just unconscious writing. It doesn't have a title.

Did you know I was doing three books with a photographer? He's Barry Feinstein, husband of Mary, of Peter, Paul and Mary. He's been taking pictures for ten years. The first one's supposed to have been done a while ago but may not be finished til the fall. It's just pictures and the words I'm going to write that coincide with the photographers, but somehow fall into the same direction or mood.

All the pictures were shot in Hollywood: shots of everything, a whole picture of Hollywood from the beautiful sign on the hill to Marlon Brando speaking while someone

holds up a sign saying "Nigger-Lover". Yeah, I dig this photographer, and I dig taking pictures myself.

Now this thing you ask me about singing traditional songs: well, I did. I sang the folk songs and country music, and I played rock 'n roll piano once. Oh yeah, I played in R and B bands. The time I changed was when I landed in New York... you know, New York for me! You have to go there and sort of surrender to New York. That's how I changed, just dug it all. It taught me to dig it all, to keep digging it all.

There's nothing that's not worth listening to, that's not worth thinking about, that's not worth singing. I learned that. I met people there, I was conscious of people and somehow come out of it very unconscious and not feeling guilty about anything. I don't have any guilt, and then again, saying that is like saying I'm completely guilty. If someone gets killed, who's to say who fired the gun? And why? He fired just because he was uptight.

Everybody reacts to what he knows, to what he's been taught and has come in contact with. He's been taught there's only one way; he's been sheltered. He's gonna get uptight about it when he sees something different. We have to ask why these people have sheltered him and taught him this. They have reasons too.

About this hotel: I was booked in here. It isn't bad really. But apart from these rooms, the bar is the only place I'm allowed in without a tie, no deep philosophical reason for not wearing one. I just don't have a tie.

No, I don't have a Ferrari either.

I don't bother myself about thoughts of success. I'd get a Ferrari if I had the urge, and the money.

One thing I know is that you can't please everybody. You know somebody's going to pick on you for something. They're going to find something wrong.

I'm good, kind, gentle, I think – I mean no harm to anybody; but people pick me apart. Either they like me or else they slam me. I get put down a lot, but I dig it when they slam me for some odd reason.

This question of British singers doing foreign songs, Blues and so on: I think that if somebody from England wants to sing a Southern Blues, it's great. If you want to do it, do it. Who's to put rules to it? Who's to say you can't do it? Who's to know, if you can't try it? You have to try many things to find out who you are. It would be like closing a book on you.

It's the people who don't do it, who live by the rules, who cause all the trouble. Life is too small – it's too much one world – to worry about if a man sings something his grandfather couldn't have sung. If an English singer is happy singing a Southern US ballad, I'd rather see him happy than see him doing something else and being unhappy. I don't like seeing people unhappy.

Authenticity? I know authentic folk music when I hear it, know it for myself, but what difference does it make?

9/16 June 1964
Nat Hentoff Interview, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 777-788.

This article was published in the *New Yorker* of October 24th 1964. It was written by staff writer Nat Hentoff under the banner -

THE CRACKIN', SHAKIN', BREAKIN' SOUNDS

It also appears in Craig McGregor's *Bob Dylan: a retrospective*. In the first part, Hentoff is mainly observing Dylan at the recording session on June 9th where Bob records the entire *Another Side Of* album in one sitting. Hentoff and Dylan met up again on June 16th to complete the interview.

The word "FOLK" in the term "folk music" used to connote a rural, homogeneous community that carried on a tradition of anonymously created music. No one person composed a piece; it evolved through generations of communal care.

In recent years, however, folk music has increasingly become the quite personal – and copyrighted-product of specific creators. More and more of them, in fact, are neither rural nor representative of centuries-old family and regional traditions. They are often city-bred converts to the folk style; and, after an apprenticeship during which they try to imitate rural models from the older approach to folk music, they write and perform their own songs out of their own concerns and pre-occupations The restless young, who have been the primary support of the rise of this kind of folk music over the past five years, regard two performers as their pre-eminent spokesmen.

One is twenty-three-year-old Joan Baez. She does not write her own material and she includes a considerable proportion of traditional, communally-created songs in her programs. But Miss Baez does speak out explicitly against racial prejudice and militarism, and she does sing some of the best of the new topical songs. Moreover, her pure, penetrating voice and her open, honest manner symbolize for her admirers a cool island of integrity in a society that the folk-song writer Malvina Reynolds has characterised in one of her songs as consisting of "little boxes." (*And the boys go into business/And marry and raise a family/In boxes made of ticky tacky/And they all look the same*)

The second – and more influential-demiurge of the folk-music microcosm is Bob Dylan, also twenty-three. Dylan's impact has been the greater because he is a writer of songs as well as a performer. Such compositions of his as *Blowin' in the Wind*, *Masters of War*, *Don't Think Twice, It's All Right*, and *Only a Pawn in Their Game* have become part of the repertoire of many other performers, including Miss Baez, who has explained: "Bobby is expressing what I – and many other young people – feel, what we want to say. Most of the 'protest' songs about the bomb and race prejudice and conformity are stupid. They have no beauty. But Bobby's songs are powerful as poetry and powerful as music. And, oh, my God, how that boy can sing!"

Another reason for Dylan's impact is the singular force of his personality. Wiry, tense, and boyish, Dylan looks and acts like a fusion of Huck Finn and a young Woody Guthrie. Both onstage and off, he appears to be just barely able to contain his prodigious energy. Pete Seeger,

who, at forty-five, is one of the elders of American folk music, recently observed: "Dylan may well become the country's most creative troubadour – if he doesn't explode."

Dylan is always dressed informally – the possibility that he will ever be seen in a tie is as remote as the possibility that Miss Baez will perform in an evening gown – and his possessions are few, the weightiest of them being a motorcycle. A wanderer, Dylan is often on the road in search of more experience. **"You can find out a lot about a small town by hanging around its poolroom,"** he says. Like Miss Baez, he prefers to keep most of his time for himself. He works only occasionally, and during the rest of the year he travels or briefly stays in a house owned by his manager, Albert Grossman, in Bearsville, New York – a small town adjacent to Woodstock and about a hundred miles north of New York. There Dylan writes songs, works on poetry, plays and novels, rides his motorcycle, and talks with his friends. From time to time, he comes to New York to record for Columbia Records.

A few weeks ago, Dylan invited me to a recording session that was to begin at seven in the evening in a Columbia studio on Seventh Avenue near Fifty-second Street. Before he arrived, a tall, lean, relaxed man in his early thirties came in and introduced himself to me as Tom Wilson, Dylan's recording producer. He was joined by two engineers and we all went into the control room. Wilson took up a post at a long broad table, between the engineers, from which he looked out into a spacious studio with a tall thicket of microphones to the left and, directly in front, an enclave containing a music stand, two microphones and an upright piano, and set off by a large screen, which would partly shield Dylan as he sang, for the purpose of improving the quality of the sound. "I have no idea what he's going to record tonight," Wilson told me. "It's all to be stuff he's written in the last couple of months."

I asked if Dylan presented any particular problems to a recording director. "My main difficulty has been pounding mike technique into him," Wilson said. "He used to get excited and move around a lot and then lean in too far, so that the mike popped. Aside from that, my basic problem with him has been to create the kind of setting in which he's relaxed. For instance, if that screen should bother him, I'd take it away, even if we have to lose a little quality in the sound." Wilson looked toward the door. "I'm somewhat concerned about tonight. We're going to do a whole album in one session. Usually, we're not in such a rush, but this album has to he ready for Columbia's fall sales convention. Except for special occasions like this, Bob has no set schedule of recording dates. We think he's important enough to record whenever he wants to come to the studio."

Five minutes after seven, Dylan walked into the studio, carrying a battered guitar case. He had on dark glasses, and his hair, dark-blond and curly, had obviously not been cut for some weeks, he was dressed in blue jeans, a black jersey, and desert boots. With him were half a dozen friends, among them Jack Elliott, a folk singer in the Woody Guthrie tradition, who was also dressed in blue jeans and desert boots, plus a brown corduroy shirt and a jaunty cowboy hat. Elliott had been carrying two bottles of Beaujolais, which he now handed to Dylan, who carefully put them on a table near the screen. Dylan opened the guitar case, took out a looped-wire harmonica holder, hung it around his neck, and then walked over to the piano and began to play in a rolling, honky-tonk style.

"He's got a wider range of talents than he shows," Wilson told me. "He kind of hoards them. You go back to his three albums. Each time there's a big leap from one to the next – in material, in performance, in everything."

Dylan came into the control room, smiling. Although he is fiercely accusatory toward society at large while he is performing, his most marked offstage characteristic is gentleness. He speaks swiftly but softly, and appears persistently anxious to make himself clear. **"We're going to make**

a good one tonight," he said to Wilson, **"I promise."** He turned to me and continued: **"There aren't any finger-pointing songs. Those records I've made, I'll stand behind them, but some of that was jumping into the scene to be heard and a lot of it was because I didn't see anybody else doing that kind of thing. Now a lot of people are doing finger-pointing songs. You know-pointing to all the things that are wrong. Me, I don't want to write for people anymore. You know – be a spokesman. Like I once wrote about Emmett Till in the first person, pretending I was him. From now on, I want to write them inside me, and to do that I'm going to have to get back to writing like I used to when I was ten – having everything come out naturally. The way I like to write is for it to come out the way I walk or talk."** Dylan frowned. **"Not that I even walk or talk yet like I'd like to. I don't carry myself yet the way Woody, Big Joe Williams, and Lightnin' Hopkins have carried themselves. I hope to some day, but they're older. They got to where music was a tool for them, a way to live more, a way to make themselves feel better. Sometimes I can make myself feel better with music, but other times it's still hard to go to sleep at night."**

A friend strolled in, and Dylan began to grumble about an interview that had been arranged for him later in the week. **"I hate to say no because after all, these guys have a job to do,"** he said shaking his head impatiently. **"But it bugs me that the first question usually turns out to be 'Are you going down South to take part in any of the civil-rights projects?' They try to fit you into things. Now, I've been down there, but I'm not going down just to hold a picket sign so they can shoot a picture of me. I know a lot of the kids in SNCC – you know, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. That's the only organisation I feel a part of spiritually. The NAACP is a bunch of old guys. I found that out by coming directly in contact with some of the people in it. They didn't understand me. They were looking to use me for something. Man, everybody's hung-up. You sometimes don't know if somebody wants you to do something because he's hung-up or because he really digs who you are. It's awful complicated, and the best thing you can do is admit it."**

Returning to the studio, Dylan stood in front of the piano and pounded out an accompaniment as he sang from one of his own new songs:

"Are you for real, baby, or are you just on the shelf?
I'm looking deep into your eyes, but all I can see is myself
If you're trying to throw me, I've already been tossed.
If you're trying to lose me, I've already been lost..."

Another friend of Dylan's arrived with three children, ranging in age from four to ten. The children raced around the studio until Wilson insisted that they be relatively confined to the control room. By ten minutes to eight, Wilson had checked out the sound balance to his satisfaction, Dylan's friends had found seats along the studio walls, and Dylan had expressed his readiness – in fact, eagerness – to begin. Wilson, in the control room, leaned forward, a stopwatch in his hand. Dylan took a deep breath, threw his head back, and plunged into a song in which he accompanied himself on guitar and harmonica. The first take was ragged; the second was both more relaxed and more vivid. At that point, Dylan, smiling, clearly appeared to be confident of his ability to do an entire album in one night. As he moved into succeeding numbers, he relied principally on the guitar for support, except for exclamatory punctuations on the harmonica.

Having glanced through a copy of Dylan's new lyrics that he had handed to Wilson, I observed to Wilson that there were indeed hardly any songs of social protest in the collection.

"Those early albums gave people the wrong idea," Wilson said. "Basically, he's in the tradition of all lasting folk music. I mean he's not a singer of protest so much as he is a singer of concern

about people. He doesn't have to be talking about Medgar Evers all the time to be effective. He can just tell a simple little story of a guy who ran off from a woman."

After three takes of one number, one of the engineers said to Wilson – "If you want to try another, we can get a better take."

"No." Wilson shook his head. "With Dylan, you have to take what you can get."

Out in the studio, Dylan, his slight form bent forward, was standing just outside the screen and listening to a playback through earphones. He began to take the earphones off during an instrumental passage, but then his voice came on, and he grinned and replaced them.

The engineer muttered again that he might get a better take if Dylan ran through the number once more.

"Forget it," Wilson said. "You don't think in terms of orthodox recording techniques when you're dealing with Dylan. You have to learn to be as free on this side of the glass as he is out there."

Dylan went on to record a song about a man leaving a girl because he was not prepared to be the kind of invincible hero and all-encompassing provider she wanted. "*It ain't me you're looking for, babe*," he sang with finality.

During the playback, I joined Dylan in the studio. "The songs so far sound as if there were real people in them," I said.

Dylan seemed surprised that I had considered it necessary to make the comment. **"There are. That's what makes them so scary. If I haven't been through what I write about, the songs aren't worth anything."** He went on, via one of his songs, to offer a complicated account of a turbulent love affair in Spanish Harlem, and at the end asked a friend: **"Did you understand it?"** The friend nodded enthusiastically. **"Well, I didn't."** Dylan said, with a laugh, and then became somber. **"It's hard being free in a song – getting it all in. Songs are so confining. Woody Guthrie told me once that songs don't have to do anything like that. But it's not true. A song has to have some kind of form to fit into the music. You can bend the words and the meter, but it still has to fit somehow. I've been getting freer in the songs I write, but I still feel confined. That's why I write a lot of poetry – if that's the word. Poetry can make it's own form."**

As Wilson signaled for the start of the next number Dylan put up his hand. **"I just want to light a cigarette, so I can see it there while I'm singing,"** he said, and grinned. **"I'm very neurotic. I need to be secure."**

By ten-thirty, seven songs had been recorded.

"This is the fastest Dylan date yet," Wilson said. "He used to be all hung up with the microphones. Now he's a pro."

Several more friends of Dylan's had arrived during the recording of the seven songs, and at this point four of them were seated in the control room behind Wilson and the engineers. The others were scattered around the studio, using the table that held the bottles of Beaujolais as their base. They opened the bottles, and every once in a while poured out a drink in a paper cup. The three children were still irrepressibly present, and once the smallest burst suddenly into the studio, ruining a take. Dylan turned on the youngster in mock anger. **"I m gonna rub**

you out," he said. **"I'll track you down and turn you to dust."** The boy giggled and ran back into the control room.

As the evening went on, Dylan's voice became more acrid. The dynamics of his singing grew more pronounced, soft, intimate passages being abruptly followed by fierce surges in volume. The relentless, driving beat of his guitar was more often supplemented by the whooping thrusts of the harmonica.

"Intensity, that's what he's got," Wilson said, apparently to himself. "By now, this kid is out-selling Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis," he went on, to me. "He's speaking to a whole new generation. And not only here. He's just been in England. He had standing room only in Royal Festival Hall."

Dylan had begun a song called *Chimes of Freedom*. One of his four friends in the control room – a lean, bearded man – proclaimed: "Bobby's talking for every hung-up person in the whole wide universe." His three companions nodded gravely.

The next composition, *Motorpsycho Nitemare*, was a mordantly satirical version of the vintage tale of the farmer, his daughter, and the traveling salesman. There were several false starts, apparently because Dylan was having trouble reading the lyrics.

"Man, dim the lights," the bearded friend counseled Wilson. "He'll get more relaxed."

"Atmosphere is not what we need,"Wilson answered, without turning around. "Legibility is what we need."

During the playback, Dylan listened intently, his lips moving, and a cigarette cocked in his right hand. A short break followed, during which Dylan shouted: **"Hey, we're gonna need some more wine!"** Two of his friends in the studio nodded and left.

After the recording session resumed, Dylan continued to work hard and conscientiously. When he was preparing for a take or listening to a playback, he seemed able to cut himself off completely from the eddies of conversation and humorous by play stirred up by his friends in the studio. Occasionally, when a line particularly pleased him, he burst into laughter, but he swiftly got back to business.

Dylan started a talking blues – a wry narrative in a sardonic recitative style, which had been developed by Woody Guthrie. "*Now I'm liberal, but to a degree,*" Dylan was drawling halfway through the song. "*I want everybody to be free. But if you think I'll let Barry Goldwater move in next door and marry my daughter, you must think: I'm crazy. I wouldn't let him do it for all the farms in Cuba.*" He was smiling broadly, and Wilson and the engineers were laughing. It was a long song, and toward the end Dylan faltered. He tried it twice more and each time he stumbled before the close.

"Let me do another song," he said to Wilson. **"I'll come back to this".**

"No." Wilson said. "Finish up this one. You'll hang us up on the order, and if I'm not here to edit, the other cat will get mixed up. Just do an insert of the last part."

"Let him start from the beginning, man," said one of the four friends sitting behind Wilson.

Wilson turned around, looking annoyed. "Why, man?"

"You don't start telling a story with Chapter Eight, man," the friend said.

"Oh, man," said Wilson, "what kind of philosophy is that? We're recording, not writing a biography."

As an obligato of protest continued behind Wilson, Dylan accepting Wilson's advice, sang the insert. His bearded friend rose silently and drew a square in the air behind Wilson's head.

Other songs, mostly of love lost or misunderstood, followed. Dylan was now tired, but he retained his good humor. **"This last one is called My Back Pages,"** he announced to Wilson. It appeared to express current desire to get away from finger-pointing and acutely personal material. "*Oh, but I was so much older then*" he sang as a refrain, "*I'm younger than that now.*"

By one-thirty, the session was over. Dylan had recorded fourteen new songs. He agreed to meet me again in a week or so and fill me in on his background. **"My background's not all that important, though,"** he said as we left the studio. **"It's what I am now that counts."**

Dylan was born in Duluth, on May 24, 1941, and grew up in Hibbing, Minnesota, a mining town near the Canadian border. He does not discuss his parents preferring to let his songs tell whatever he wants to say about his personal history. **"You can stand at one end of Hibbing on the main drag an' see clear past the city limits on the other end,"** Dylan once noted in a poem, *My Life in a Stolen Moment*, printed in the program of a 1963 Town Hall concert he gave. Like Dylan's parents, it appears, the town was neither rich nor poor, but it was, Dylan has said, **"a dyin' town."** He ran away from home seventeen times – at ten, twelve, thirteen, fifteen, fifteen-and-a-half, seventeen and eighteen. His travels included South Dakota, New Mexico, Kansas and California. In between flights he taught himself the guitar, which he had begun playing at the age often. At fifteen he was playing the harmonica and the autoharp and had written his first song, a ballad dedicated to Brigitte Bardot. In the spring of 1960, Dylan entered the University of Minnesota, in Minneapolis, which he attended for something under six months. In My Life in a Stolen Moment, Dylan has summarised his college career dourly: **"I sat in science class an' flunked out for refusin' to watch a rabbit die. I got expelled from English class for using four-letter words in a paper describing the English teacher. I also failed out of communication class for callin' up every day and sayin' I couldn't come... I was kept around for kicks at a fraternity house. They let me live there, an' I did until they wanted me to join"**. Paul Nelson and Jon Pankake, who edit the *Little Sandy Review*, a quarterly magazine published in Minneapolis that is devoted to critical articles on folk music and performers, remember meeting Dylan at the University of Minnesota in the summer of 1960, while he was part of a group of singers who performed at The Scholar, a coffee-house near the university. Nelson and Pankake, who were students at the university then, have since noted in their publication. "We recall Bob as a soft-spoken, rather unprepossessing youngster... well-groomed and neat in the standard campus costume of slacks, sweater, white oxford sneakers, poplin raincoat and dark glasses."

Before Dylan arrived at the university, his singing had been strongly influenced by such Negro folk interpreters as Leadbelly and Big Joe Williams. He had met Williams in Evanston, Illinois, during his break from home at the age of twelve. Dylan had also been attracted to several urban-style rhythm-and-blues performers, notably Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry. Other shaping forces were white country music figures – particularly Hank Williams, Hank Snow, and Jimmie Rodgers. During his brief stay at the university Dylan became especially absorbed in the recordings of Woody Guthrie, the Oklahoma-born traveler who had created the most distinctive body of American topical folk material to come to light in this century. Since 1954 Guthrie, ill with Huntington's chorea, a progressive disease of the nervous system, had not been able to perform, but he was allowed to receive visitors. In the autumn of 1960, Dylan quit

university and decided to visit Guthrie at Greystone Hospital in New Jersey. Dylan returned briefly to Minnesota the following May, to sing at a university hootenanny, and Nelson and Pankake saw him again on that occasion. "In a mere half year," they have recalled in the *Little Sandy Review*, "he had learned to churn up exciting, bluesy, hard-driving harmonica-and-guitar music, and had absorbed during his visits with Guthrie not only the great Okie musician's unpredictable syntax but his very vocal color diction, and inflection. Dylan's performance that spring evening of a selection of Guthrie songs was hectic and shaky, but it contained all the elements of the now-perfected performing style that has made him the most original newcomer to folk music."

The winter Dylan visited Guthrie was otherwise bleak. He spent most of it in New York, where he found it difficult to get steady work singing. In *Talkin' New York*, a caustic song describing his first months in the city, Dylan tells of having been turned away by a coffeehouse owner, who told him scornfully: "You sound like a hillbilly. We want folk singers here." There were nights when he slept in the subway but eventually he found friends and a place to stay on the lower East Side, and after he had returned from the spring hootenanny he began getting more frequent engagements in New York. John Hammond at Columbia Records, who has discovered a sizeable number of important jazz and folk performers during the past thirty years heard Dylan that summer while attending a rehearsal of another folk singer Hammond was about to record for Columbia. Impressed by the young man's raw force and by the vivid lyrics of his songs Hammond auditioned him and immediately signed him to a recording contract. Then, in September, 1961, while Dylan was appearing at Gerde's Folk City, a casual refuge for 'citybillies' (as the young city singers and musicians are now called in the trade) on West Fourth Street in Greenwich Village, he was heard by Robert Shelton, folk-music critic for the *New York Times*, who wrote of him enthusiastically.

Dylan began to prosper. He enlarged his following by appearing at the Newport and Monterey Folk Festivals and giving concerts through out the country. There have been a few snags, as when he walked off the Ed Sullivan television show in the spring of 1963 because the Columbia Broadcasting System would not permit him to sing a tart appraisal of the John Birch Society, but on the whole, he has experienced accelerating success. His first three Columbia albums – *Bob Dylan*, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, and *The Times They Are A-Changin'* – have by now reached a cumulative sales figure of nearly four hundred thousand. In addition, he has received large royalties as the composer of songs that have become hits through recordings by Peter, Paul and Mary, the Kingston Trio, and other performers. At present, Dylan's fees for a concert appearance range from two thousand to three thousand dollars a night. He has sometimes agreed to sing at a nominal fee for new, non-profit folk societies, however, and has often performed without charge at civil-rights rallies.

Musically, Dylan has transcended most of his early influences and developed an incisively personal style. His vocal sound is most often characterised by flaying harshness. Mitch Jayne, a member of the Dillards, a folk group from Missouri, has described Dylan's sound as "very much like a dog with his leg caught in barbed wire." Yet Dylan's admirers come to accept and even delight in the harshness, because of the vitality and wit at its core, And they point out that in intimate ballads he is capable of a fragile lyricism that does not slip into bathos. It is Dylan's work as a composer, however, that has won him a wider audience than his singing alone might have. Whether concerned with cosmic specters or personal conundrums, Dylan's lyrics are pungently idiomatic. He has a superb ear for speech rhythms, a generally astute sense of selective detail, and a natural storyteller's command of narrative pacing. His songs sound as if they were being created out of oral street history rather than carefully written in tranquility. On a stage, Dylan performs his songs as if he had an urgent story to tell. In his work there is little of the polished grace of such carefully trained contemporary minstrels as Richard Dyer-Bennet. Nor, on the other hand, do his performances reflect the calculated showmanship of a Harry

Belafonte or of Peter, Paul, and Mary. Dylan off the stage is very much the same as Dylan the performer – restless, insatiably hungry for experience, idealistic, but sceptical of neatly defined causes.

In the past year, as his renown has increased, Dylan has become more elusive. He felt so strongly threatened by his initial fame that he welcomed the chance to use the Bearsville home of his manager as a refuge between concerts, and he still spends most of his time there when he's not travelling. A week after the recording session, he telephoned me from Bearsville, and we agreed to meet the next evening at the Keneret, a restaurant on lower Seventh Avenue, in the Village. It specialises in Middle Eastern food, one of Dylan's preferences, but does not have a liquor license. Upon keeping our rendezvous, therefore, we went next door for a few bottles of Beaujolais and then returned to the Keneret. Dylan was as restless as usual, and as he talked, his hands moved constantly and his voice sounded as if he were never quite able to catch his breath.

I asked him what he had meant, exactly, when he spoke at the recording session of abandoning "finger-pointing" songs, and he took a sip of wine, leaned forward, and said: **"I looked around and saw all those people pointing fingers at the bomb. But the bomb is getting boring, because what's wrong goes much deeper than the bomb. What's wrong is how few people are free. Most people walking around are tied down to something that doesn't let them really speak, so they just add their confusion to the mess. I mean, they have some kind of vested interest in the way things are now. Me, I'm cool."** He smiled. **"You know, Joanie – Joanie Baez – worries about me. She worries about whether people will get control over me and exploit me. But I'm cool. I'm in control, because I don't care about money, and all that. I'm cool in myself, because I've gone through enough changes so that I know what's real to me and what isn't. Like this fame. It's done something to me. It's OK in the Village here. People don't pay attention to me. But in other towns it's funny knowing that people you don't know figure they know you. I mean, they think they know everything about you. One thing is groovy, though. I got birthday cards this year from people I'd never heard of. It's weird, isn't it? There are people I've really touched whom I'll never know."**

He lit a cigarette. **"But in other ways being noticed can be a weight. So I disappear a lot. I go to places where I'm not going to be noticed. And I can."** He laughed. **"I have no work to do. I have no job. I'm not committed to anything except making a few records and playing a few concerts. I'm weird that way. Most people, when they get up in a morning, have to do what they have to do. I could pretend there were all kinds of things I had to do every day. But why? So I do whatever I feel like. I might make movies of my friends around Woodstock, one day. I write a lot. I get involved in scenes with people. A lot of scenes are going on with me all the time here in the Village, in Paris during my trips to Europe, in lots of places."**

I asked Dylan how far ahead he planned. **"I don't look past right now,"** he said **"Now there's this fame business. I know it s going to go away. It has to. This so-called mass fame comes from people who get caught up in a thing for a while and buy the records. Then they stop. And when they stop, I won't be famous anymore."**

We became aware that a young waitress was standing by diffidently. Dylan turned to her and she asked him for his autograph. He signed his name with gusto and signed again when she asked if he would give her an autograph for a friend. "I'm sorry to have interrupted your dinner," she said, smiling. "But I'm really not."

"I get letters from people – young people – all the time," Dylan continued when she left us. **"I wonder if they write letters like those to other people they don't know. They just want to tell me things, and sometimes they go into their personal hang-ups. Some send poetry. I like**

getting them – read them all and answer some. But I don't mean I give any of the people who write to me any answers to their problems." He leaned forward and talked more rapidly. **"It's like when somebody wants to tell me what the 'moral' thing is to do, I want them to show me. If they have anything to say about morals, I want to know what it is they do. Same with me. All I can do is show people who ask me questions how I live. All I can do is be me. I can't tell them how to change things, because there's only one way to change things, and that's to cut yourself off from all the chains. That's hard for most people to do."**

I had Dylan's *The Times They Are A-Changin'* album with me, and I pointed out to him a section of his notes on the cover in which he spoke of how he had always been running when he was a boy – running away from Hibbing and from his parents.

Dylan took a sip of wine. **"I kept running because I wasn't free,"** he said. **"I was constantly on guard. Somehow, way back then, I already knew that parents do what they do because they're up tight. They're concerned with their kids in relation to themselves. I mean, they want their kids to please them, not to embarrass them – so they can be proud of them. They want you to be what they want you to be. So I started running when I was ten. But always I'd get picked up and sent home. When I was thirteen, I was traveling with a carnival through upper Minnesota and North and South Dakota, and I got picked up again. I tried again and again, and when I was eighteen I cut out for good. I was still running when I came to New York. Just because you're free to move doesn't mean you're free. Finally, I got so far out I was cut off from everybody and everything. It was then I decided there was no sense in running so far and so fast when there was no longer anybody there. It was fake. It was running for the sake of running. So I stopped. I've got no place to run from. I don't have to be any place I don't want to be. But I am by no means an example for any kid wanting to strike out. I mean. I wouldn't want a young kid to leave home because I did it and then have to go through a lot of the things I went through. Everybody has to find his own way to be free. There isn't anybody who can help you in that sense. Nobody was able to help me. Like seeing Woody Guthrie was one of the main reasons I came east. He was an idol to me. A couple of years ago, after I'd gotten to know him, I was going through some very bad changes and I went to see Woody, like I'd go to somebody to confess to. But I couldn't confess to him. It was silly. I did go and talk with him – as much as he could talk – and the talking helped. But basically he wasn't able to help me at all. I finally realised that. So Woody was my last idol."**

There was a pause. **"I've learned a lot in these past few years,"** Dylan said softly. **"Like about beauty"**.

I reminded him of what he had said about his changing criteria of beauty in some notes he did for a Joan Baez album. There he had written in that when he first heard her voice, before he knew her, his reaction had been:

> "I hate that kind a sound," said I
> The only beauty's ugly, man
> The crackin', shakin', breakin' sounds're
> The only beauty I understand."

Dylan laughed. **"Yeah,"** he said. **"I was wrong. My hang-up was that I used to try to define beauty. Now I take it as it is, however it is. That's why I like Hemingway. I don't read much. Usually I read what people put in my hands. But I do read Hemingway. He didn't have to use adjectives. He didn't really have to define what he was saying. He just said It. I can't do that yet, but that's what I want to be able to do."**

A young actor from Julian Beck's and Judith Malina's Living Theatre troupe stopped by the table and Dylan shook hands with him enthusiastically. "We're leaving for Europe soon," the actor said. "But when we come back we're going out on the street. We're going to put on plays right on the street, for anyone who wants to watch."

"Hey!" said Dylan, bouncing in his seat. **"Tell Julian and Judith that I want to be in on that."**

The actor said he would and took Dylan's telephone number. Then he said: "Bob, are you doing only your own songs now – none of the old folk songs at all?"

"Have to," Dylan answered. **"When I'm up tight and it's raining outside and nobody's around and somebody I want is a long way from me – and with someone else besides – I can't sing '*Ain't Got No Use For Your Red Apple Juice*.' I don't care how great an old song it is or what its tradition is. I have to make a new song out of what I know and out of what I'm feeling."**

The conversation turned to civil rights and the actor used the term "the movement" to signify the work of the civil-rights activists. Dylan looked at him quizzically. **"I agree with everything that's happening",** he said, **"but I'm not part of no movement. If I was, I wouldn't be able to do anything else but be in 'the movement' I just can't have people sit around and make rules for me. I do a lot of things no movement would allow."** He took a long drink of Beaujolais. **"It's like politics,"** he went on. **"I just can't make it with any organisation. I fell into a trap once – last December – when I agreed to accept the Tom Paine Award from the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. At the Americana Hotel! In the Grand Ballroom! As soon as I got there, I felt up tight. First of all, the people with me couldn't get in. They looked even funkier than I did, I guess. They weren't dressed right, or something. Inside the ballroom, I really got up tight. I began to drink. I looked down from the platform and saw a bunch of people who had nothing to do with my kind of politics. I looked down and I got scared. They were supposed to be on my side, but I didn't feel any connection with them. Here were these people who'd been all involved with the left in the Thirties, and now they were supporting civil rights drives. That's groovy, but they also had minks and jewels, and it was like they were giving the money out of guilt. I got up to leave and they followed me and caught me. They told me I had to accept the award. When I got up to make my speech, I couldn't say anything by that time but what was passing through my mind. They'd been talking about Kennedy being killed, and Bill Moore and Medgar Evers and the Buddhist monks in Vietnam being killed. I had to say something about Lee Oswald. I told them I'd read a lot of his feelings in the papers and I knew he was up tight. Said I'd been up tight, too, so I'd got a lot of his feelings. I saw a lot of myself in Oswald, I said, and I saw in him a lot of the times we're all living in. And, you know, they started booing. They looked at me like I was an animal. They actually thought I was saying it was a good thing Kennedy had been killed. That's how far out they are. I was talking about Oswald. And then I started talking about some friends of mine in Harlem – some of them junkies, all of them poor. And I said they need freedom as much as anybody else, and what's anybody doing for them? The chairman was kicking my leg under the table, and I told him: 'Get out of here. ' Now, what I was supposed to be was a nice cat. I was supposed to say: 'I appreciate your award and I'm a great singer and I'm a great believer in liberals, and you buy my records and I'll support your cause. ' But I didn't, and so I wasn't accepted that night. That's the cause of a lot of those chains I was talking about – people wanting to be accepted, people not wanting to be alone. But, after all, what is it to be alone? I've been alone sometimes in front of three thousand people. I was alone that night."**

The actor nodded sympathetically. Dylan snapped his fingers. **"I almost forgot,"** he said. **"You know, they were talking about freedom fighters that night. I've been in Mississippi, man. I know those people on another level besides civil rights campaigns. I know them as friends. Like Jim Forman, one of the heads of SNCC. I'll stand on his side any time. But those people**

that night were actually getting me to look at colored people as colored people. I tell you, I'm never going to have anything to do with any political organisation again in my life. Oh, I might help a friend if he was campaigning for office. But I'm not going to be part of any organisation. Those people at that dinner were the same as everybody else. They're doing their time. They're chained to what we're doing. The only thing is, they're trying to put morals and great deeds on their chains, but basically they don't want to jeopardise their positions. They got their jobs to keep. There's nothing there for me, and there's nothing there for the kind of people I hang around with. The only thing I'm sorry about is that I guess I hurt the collection at the dinner. I didn't know they were going to try to collect money after my speech. I guess I lost them a lot of money. Well, I offered to pay them whatever it was they figured they'd lost because of the way I talked. I told them I didn't care how much it was. I hate debt, especially moral debts. They're worse than money debts."

Exhausted by his monologue, Dylan sank back and poured more Beaujolais. **"People talk about trying to change society,"** he said. **"All I know is that so long as people stay so concerned about protecting their status and protecting what they have, ain't nothing going to be done. Oh, there may be some change of levels inside the circle, but nobody's going to learn anything."**

The actor left, and it was time for Dylan to head back up-state. **"Come up and visit next week,"** he said to me, **"and I'll give you a ride on my motorcycle."** He hunched his shoulders and walked off quickly.

7 November 1964
Comments after Show at Princeton University

Source: *The Wicked Messenger*, by Ian Woodward, 25 Feb 05, 2007(5705)

A DYLAN CONCERT FORTY YEARS AGO

At the beginning of June 1969, a loved one bought me *Bob Dylan* by Daniel Kramer; at that time, I'd not heard of the book and found it fascinating. One of the more memorable scenes is on page 37. Kramer reported that, following a concert at Princeton, Dylan granted a couple of interviews. A young college reporter asked Dylan if he believed in the words he wrote. Dylan replied, **"I believe in every breath I take!",** embraced the young reporter and added, **"And I believe in every breath you take!"** at which point Allen Ginsberg joined in the group hug. This came back to me not so long ago.

The dating of this Princeton concert has always been a bit uncertain, with September 1964 being suggested. In fact, it seems that the show took place at McCarter Theatre on Saturday, 7 November. An article in *The Daily Princetonian* in 2000 referred back an earlier report in the same publication. This appeared to be dated 9 November 1964 and, in turn, referred to "a SRO audience Saturday night", which would have been 7 November 1964.

7 Nov 64 Princeton, NJ McCarter Theatre, Princeton University

The name of the interviewer is not given. Asked about *With God On Our Side* after the show, Dylan said, **"There must be some people somewhere that don't believe God is on their side. Do communists believe in God? How could He be on their side if they don't believe in Him?"**. The article goes on to say that Dylan believes in **"every breath he breathes"** and **"in every breath anyone else breathes, too"**. This is clearly the incident recalled by Kramer.

The article starts with a quote from Dylan: **"It doesn't matter whether the song has come down from a thousand years or you wrote it yesterday sitting on the toilet"**. In respect of the themes of love and death, Dylan commented, **"I only met death once, but next time, I'll be ready, yes, I'll be ready"**. The article also says that, rather than songs, he would prefer to write **"those things without any form, whatever you want to call them, poetry if you like"**. This very much fits with our view of the artistic restlessness expressed by Dylan during this period of time. After the interview, Dylan & Co. left in search of a **"respectable bar, with nice wide booths, that looks like it's just out of Russia, you know, just right for us"**.

As to the content of the show, little information is given in the article. There is a reference to *Talking John Birch Society Paranoid Blues* but it isn't clear if it was performed at this concert but that seems likely. Similarly, there is a passing reference to *With God On Our Side* but nothing definite. And that's all, folks, I'm afraid.

The article also says that this was the second year that Dylan had played to a sold-out audience at Princeton. Therefore, there was a concert in 1963.

17 February 1965
The Les Crane Show, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 43-51.

Broadcast live by WABC-TV on February 17 1965. Odetta (OD) and Tommy Sands (TS) make the odd contribution. Bruce Langhorn provides back-up for Dylan on electric guitar. The non-Dylan sections have been cut or trimmed.

In *Behind The Shades*, Clinton Heylin says that Dylan "demolished Crane on air" and how "he neatly ducked each and every question". That's not at all fair. Dylan is in high humor, and so is Les Crane and together they have a marvelous time making entertainment for a very receptive audience. This is a fun interview, not one of those "put-down" sessions that Bob was in the frequent habit of performing... This is an interview where you really have to listen to the tape to get a feeling for the humorous atmosphere.

LC: There are important people in their fields and there are some fields of importance that when you're good in them you affect the entire move – by move I mean the social move of a country. I think, er, a lot of America and a lot about America has been and will continue to be told in music, music created by true American folk artists and probably one of the most highly acclaimed and highest regarded true American folk composers and performers is Mr Bob Dylan, ladies and gentlemen! (wild applause) Hello Bobby!
BD: I'm alright! Are you plugged in?
LC: All right.

Bob Dylan sings *It's All Over Now Baby Blue*

LC: Thank you, Bob and I'll be right back.

Program break

LC: How'd it feel?
BD: Fine.
LC: Did it feel good?
BD: Felt good.
LC: Yeah, you were groovy. What'cha doin' with that? (pointing to the harmonica holder)
BD: Oh, I'm just trying to get it down so it doesn't fall in the way of my voice you know.
LC: We had... looking at that harmonica, have you ever met Jesse Fuller?
BD: Sure.
LC: Jessie was on the show a couple of weeks ago. We didn't get a chance to talk much but next time he comes back, I want to because he looks like an amazing gentleman. Talking about amazing gentlemen, how old are you?
BD: Twenty-three!
LC: Twenty-three years old!
BD: Yeah, I'll be 24 in May!
LC: Yeah. A lot's happened to you in just 23 years hasn't it?
BD: Yeah, yeah, fantastic!
LC: Are you happy about it?
BD: Oh, yeah, yeah.
LC: You oughta be. Because you're successful at doing, I think, what you want to do more than anything else.

BD: Yeah, yeah, I don't have much to think about.
LC: You don't have much to think about? I think you must be thinking about an awful lot of things to write the kind of things you do.
BD: Yeah, yeah.
LC: Tell 'em!
BD: Yeah.
LC: Tell 'em, just for those out there in the audience that might not know all of the songs that you've written. Just name a few of the big ones!
BD: Oh.
LC: This is the composer of...
BD: *Subterranean Homesick Blues*!
LC: No! That ain't one of the big ones! (audience laughter)
BD: No?
LC: No.
BD: Let's see, *One Too Many Mornings*.
LC: How about *Blowin' In The Wind*?
BD: Yeah? (applause)
LC: Do you folks, maybe you remember the night that Judy Collins..., and I kept saying "You gotta sing this song, you gotta sing this song" and Judy Collins came out and sang the full original version of *Hard Rain's Gonna Fall*? Well, Bob wrote that!
BD: **Yeah, I wrote that** (applause)**.**
LC: Who are you waving at?
BD: Odetta!
LC: Odetta! (To audience) Do you know who Odetta is? (lots of applause). Put a light on that lady!! How are you darling? ... Talk about great artists! That's one of them! (To Odetta) You are going to be on show in a while aren't you?
OD: Next month.
LC: Next month. Yeah, Odetta is all booked... she's gonna come out here and sing sometime. When did you first start pickin' and singin', Bob?
BD: Oh... When I was about ten, eleven.
LC: Always a guitar? Did you start out with a guitar or did you start out playing something else, or what?
BD: Piano. Piano and guitar.
LC: Where are you from? Where were you born?
BD: Minnesota.
LC: Did you go to school there?
BD: Yeah.
LC: How far did you get through school?
BD: Oh, I got all the way.
LC: Did you? High school?
BD: Yeah.
LC: Did you go to college and all?
BD: No, not really, no.
LC: Then, you kinda got on the road.
BD: I wouldn't call it a road, I got on, you know (audience laughter)**. I did it!** (giggles) **Whatever.**
LC: When did you start writing original tunes?
BD: Well, I started writing, y'know, a long time ago. You know how you write when you write these insane things down, y'know, when you really don't know what else to do. That's when I started writing. I started writing songs... that's a different story, you know... I started writing songs after I heard Hank Williams.
LC: Hank Williams? Did he really inspired you?
BD: Yeah.

LC: *Cold Cold Heart*? *Jambalaya*? Things like that?
BD: Yeah. Cole Porter.
LC: Cole Porter??
BD: Yeah.
LC: Now you're putting me on!
BD: No. (audience laughter).
LC: Yeah, you are!
BD: No, I'm not!
LC: Did you see Judy Collins sing *Hard Rain*?
BD: I did. I saw that!
LC: You watch the show.
BD: All the time. Yeah I do.
LC: Where do you see it mostly?
BD: I saw it last time I was in New York City. I was there to make another record. I saw the show. I saw her singing.
LC: Where were you when you watched the show? You remember the last time?
BD: Somebody's house.
LC: They told me you were in a pool hall last time you saw it.
BD: Oh, I did see the show from a pool hall. Your show goes into the pool halls! (audience laughter)
LC: Yeah?
BD: Because, it goes right in and it stays on ... and ... not even the late movie can get it out.
LC: We're very big in the pool halls.
BD: Very big in the pool halls (audience laughter) **and... around... south side bars** (audience laughter).
LC: South side bars? Yeah? (audience laughter)
BD: Right there. Down that East End.
LC: You think that means anything?
BD: No, no (audience laughter).
LC: You think we're gonna make it with this show?
BD: I think so!
LC: Yeah?
BD: Yeah! I think so! (giggles) (audience laughter) **Despite, y'know, whatever.**
LC: What's the matter?
BD: Oh, nothin'! (audience laughter)
LC: Are you nervous?
BD: I'm not nervous, no! I'm... eh... the carpet!
LC: The carpet??
BD: Yellow... you know...
LC: Yeah?
BD: I've never seen.., eh... I never reflected before when I've seen the show that it was so yellow. (audience laughter)
LC: The floor. I assume he's... you're referring to the floor?
BD: Yeah.
LC: Did you get the painting crew in here? (audience laughter)
BD: No.
LC: I mean, is it good or bad?
BD: It's fine, It's fine! Just, you know, it's... I did see the show and it's so... tight! That's all. It seems like it's very big, y'know.
LC: Everybody says that. Apparently it looks bigger on the television than it does here in the studio. But it's a pretty big studio. We have one of the largest studios audiences of any television... What do you think about it, do you watch much television?
BD: Oh, I do once in a while you know.

LC: What kind of shows do you like mostly?
BD: Oh, I like the movies.
LC: Yeah.
BD: Like the movies... I see good movies on television. Best place to see good movies these days, on television!
LC: Yeah... We'll be right back, Bob Dylan and I in just about a minute from right now.

Break in the program.

LC: Bob, when you hear other people do your stuff, do you enjoy listening to Peter Paul And Mary do all your things.
BD: Sure, yeah.
LC: Yeah?
BD: Yeah!
LC: I think that's a real compliment to have so many people recording your things. Besides, you get all that money, too.
BD: Yeah.
LC: What are you doing with all that money by the way?
BD: Oh, buying boots, bananas, fruit, pears.
LC: Boots, bananas, fruit, pears ...
BD: Bought some very fancy ashtrays the other day.
LC: Did you really? Well, where do you keep all that? I understand you don't have a place to keep all that... You travel all the time.
BD: I do, yeah.
LC: What, you strap it all on the motorcycle.
BD: No, I don't really ride my motorcycle that much. I have one though.
LC: You do.
BD: Yeah. I'm thinking of getting a car.
LC: A car!
BD: But I don't know what kind to get.
LC: Yeah.
BD: Yeah, I'm thinking about a Maserati; You ever heard of one of those?
LC: Yeah.
BD: Well, I never saw one, but I like the name.
LC: Mas-er-rati!
BD: Yeah. Maserati. Bob Dylan and his Maserati.
LC: Because it's Italian? Bob Dylan and his swinging Maserati. No, I don't want you in a Maserati.
BD: No?
LC: No, I don't. I ... you know I shouldn't say this because I ...
BD: He wants me in one! (referring to someone shouting 'yeah' from the audience).
LC: Well, that's because he didn't get the same kind of chilling thought I just got which I probably shouldn't bring up.
BD: What?
LC: But I will anyway.
BD: Yeah?
LC: I think you represent to America and to American youth something very very vital and the last guy that had this kind of impact on the youth of this country was James Dean ...
BD: Ah.
LC: And I don't want you riding around in any hot sports cars.
BD: OK! I won't. I won't, Les! (audience laughter).
LC: OK?
BD: Well, you know.

LC: It's Volkswagen time for you! (audience laughter)
BD: That's what I've been told.
LC: A detuned Volkswagen.
BD: What about one of those little three wheeled jobs? You know those little...
LC: Yeah, a Messerschmidt they call those. Did I say that right? Yes I did. We're still on so apparently I did (audience laughter). Listen, how does it feel, Bob, when you're 22 years old and you go out on the stage at the Lincoln Center ...
BD: Old?
LC: Well, you were 22 then.
BD: Oh, yeah.
LC: And there are thousands of people jamming that place, paying top dollar, and according you one of the greatest ovations that... What does it feel like when you're getting this kind of ovation at this kind of an age when you have the kind of respect and adulation you have? That's a tough question.
BD: Yeah.
LC: But answer it.
BD: Well... well, I'll tell ya Les (Bob and audience laugh)... **I can't answer that.**
LC: Yes, you can.
BD: Oh. Well it feels just delicious, y'know, wonderful. It feels... marvelous, splendid, swinging, groovy, fantastic
LC: Groovy, marvelous, splendid, fantastic
BD: Bobby Neuwirth (laughs)
LC: Yeah, I'll buy. I'll buy all those things. What do you do mostly, you travel a lot don't you?
BD: I do yes.
LC: Give a lot of concerts?
BD: Ah. I do, yes. Yeah.
LC: Where mostly.
BD: Oh, it really ranges, you know. Everyplace from college theaters to Vaudeville halls.
LC: Yeah. What kind of crowds, mostly young people or are the older people starting to get your message?
BD: Oh, good crowds, good crowds. I don't really know, uh, I don't really know what... young people, or old people, but they're all right people. You know. They're all right.
LC: Yeah.
BD: Yeah.
LC: Most of your songs... I don't want to hang you up with corny questions, but it's true that most of your songs say something...
BD: Uh-hum.
LC: There is a message...
BD: Yeah.
LC: ...in almost everything you say. What is your main message?
BD: Eat?
LC: No, I don't think that's it. And that's a cute answer but that's not the message.
BD: Yeah. Ah. My main message is, ah, you know (giggles)**, you want it in one word** (Bob and audience laugh)**, one word!**
LC: No.
BD: Well, I'll tell ya Les.
LC: Yeah, Bob.
BD: One word message. It's just, ah, 'Be', you know.
LC: Be?
BD: Be. Be period. Is.
LC: How about love?
BD: Love? That's an okay word, yeah. That's all right I guess, but it's been used a lot, it's been used a lot.

LC: But that's part of your message, isn't it?
BD: Love? Well, yeah, but everybody says that.
LC: That doesn't make it anything wrong with it.
BD: No, yeah, anybody can say it.
LC: What about 'swing'?
BD: Swing? That's a good message.
LC: Is that part of your message?
BD: Swing. Swing. Love. Be. Is. Was. Were. Double.
LC: Double?
BD: Double up, once in a while.
LC: Yeah (audience laughter). You're gonna sit there and I, I put on these duds for you tonight.
BD: You did?
LC: In a tribute to you and you're gonna sit there and put me on, right?
BD: No, I'm not putting you on, everybody always thinks that (audience laughter).
LC: Everybody always thinks you're putting them...
BD: Yeah, yeah, it's weird, weird. That's a nice tie though.
LC: You like that tie?
BD: Yeah. Like the tie.
LC: You never wear a tie.
BD: No. Once in a while I do. I watch television in a tie (applause)**. Hey, that's okay. I work, hey! You gonna gimme that tie?**
LC: Swing! Love!
BD: Thank you very much! fantastic. What about those boots Les? (audience roars with laughter)**. You got a buckle on...**
LC: What size are yours?
BD: 8 1/2.
LC: You couldn't get in... it's the same boots! You know that?
BD: They are?
LC: It's the same boots.
BD: Yours are a little shinier than mine though.
LC: Hey Bob, that's a nice harmonica.
BD: It is.
LC: (plays some tune on it) We'll be back right after this brief message...

Break in the program.

LC: We're back! Tommy Sands, Caterina Valente, Bob Dylan, Cy Pulman...

Talk with Tommy Sands; break

BD: No, no. I'm not married.
LC: You say that as though you don't approve of it.
BD: Oh, I approve.
LC: You just haven't found the lady yet? Is that it?
BD: Oh, that's not true either. I just am not married you know (audience laughter).
LC: (to part of the audience) What are you breaking up about over there? You're really cracking up.

Talk with Caterina Valente

LC: (to Dylan) What did you do when I looked over there?
BD: Nothing, Les. (audience laughter)**. I didn't do anything.**

LC: You are really cracking up this audience!
BD: Nah, nah, I'm not.

Tommy Sands makes an impromptu speech saying how Dylan resembles James Dean and what a great future he has as an actor,

LC: How do you like that Bobby?
BD: Well, thank you very much (audience laughter).
LC: Have you ever given any thought to acting. Think you might enjoy acting?
BD: Well, I'm gonna try to make a movie this summer. Which Allen Ginsberg is writing. I'm rewriting...
LC: Allen Ginsberg, the poet?
BD: Yeah, yeah.
LC: He was on this program you know.
BD: Yeah.
LC: Extolling the virtues of marijuana one night.
BD: Really? Allen? (audience laughter)**. Sounds like a lie to me** (audience laughter)**.**
LC: That's really ... You think I'm lying?
BD: No, I didn't mean that.
LC: Allen Ginsberg was sitting in that chair where Caterina Valente is sitting right now and he said that he thought that we ought to legalize pot.
BD: He said that?
LC: Right on the television.
BD: Phew!
LC: Can you imagine that?
BD: Nah. Allen is a little funny sometimes (audience roars with laughter)**.**
LC: Allen's funny sometimes, huh? Yes... what is this movie going to be about?
BD: Oh it's a, sort of a horror cowboy movie (audience laughter)**. Takes place on the New York Thruway.**
LC: A horror cowboy movie that takes place... I don't think that's exactly what Tommy Sands had in mind.
BD: No, well, it's, that's the kind of movie it's gonna be though. You know.
LC: It's gonna be one of those underground pictures, right?
BD: No. It's gonna be all straight. On the up and up.
LC: Yeah? Are you gonna star in it?
BD: Yeah, yeah, I'm a hero.
LC: You're the hero? You play the horrible cowboy?
BD: I play my mother (audience laughter)**.**
LC: You play your mother? In the movie?
BD: In the movie. You gotta see the movie (audience laughter)**.**
LC: He's quite the put on artist, isn't he?
BD: Nah, God.
LC: You're terrible.
BD: Nah. Don't want to be categorized.

Tommy Sands (TS) interjects:

TS: Hey, can I ask you a question? may I ask you a question, Bob?
BD: Sure.
TS: ...so many of the present artists seem to do the same thing as the country artists, yet they seem to have a wider appeal. Why is that?
BD: I Don't know. No. No.

LC: I'll tell you why. It's because the country artists haven't had the kind of exposure, lately, that the folk artists have had. They travel in different circles...

Session continues with Caterina Valente & others.

Bob Dylan sings *It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)*

3 March 1965
Press Conference, Greenwich Village, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 53-54.

DYLAN MEETS THE PRESS

This was a "press conference" that never took place, being simply a script concocted jointly by Dylan and J. R. Goddard of the Village Voice. They were known to each other since Goddard had reviewed Dylan's first album in 1962. This was one of the first of a series of spoof interviews that Dylan was involved with over the years and especially around this time. It was published in the Village Voice on March 25th 1965

Dylan had consented to answer all those deep, meaningful, searching questions he's been bombarded with for years! The following took place between Dylan and the large number of newsmen on hand:

Bobby, We know you changed your name. Come on now, what's your real name?

BD: Philip Ochs. I'm gonna change it back when I see it pays.

Who did you write songs like before?

BD: Ever heard of Gene Vincent, Buddy Holly?

Then you had a rock n' roll band in high school?

BD: I had a banana band in high school.

Then you heard of Guthrie and he changed your life.

BD: Then I heard of Josh White.

Then you heard of Guthrie.

BD: Then I heard about those riots in San Francisco.

The HUAC riots?

BD: And I missed out on meeting James Dean so I decided to meet Woody Guthrie.

Was Woody Guthrie your greatest influence?

BD: I don't know that I'd say that, but for a spell, the idea of him affected me quite much.

How about Brecht? Read much of him?

BD: No. But I've read him.

Rimbaud?

BD: I've read his tiny little book 'Evil Flowers'.

You're thinking of Baudelaire.

BD: Yes, I've read his tiny little book, too.

How about Hank Williams? Do you consider him an influence?

BD: Hey look, I consider Hank Williams, Captain Marvel, Marlon Brando, The Tennessee Stud, Clark Kent, Walter Cronkite and J. Carrol Neish all influences. Now what is it—please—what is it exactly you people want to know?

Tell us about your movie.

BD: It's gonna be in black and white.

Will it be in the Andy Warhol style?

BD: Who's Andy Warhol? Listen, my movie will be – I can say definitely – it will be in the style of the early Puerto Rican films.

Who's writing it?

BD: Allen Ginsberg. I'm going to rewrite it.

Who will you play in the film?

BD: The hero.

Who is it that you're going to be?

BD: My mother.

Bob, do you have any philosophy about life and death? About death?

BD: How do I know, I haven't died yet. Hey, you're insulting me all to shit...

What goes on between you and Baez that doesn't meet the eye?

BD: She's my fortune teller.

What about your friends The Beatles? Did you see them when you were there?

BD: John Lennon and I came down to the Village early one morning. They wouldn't let us in The Figaro or The Hip Bagel or The Feenjon. This time I'm going to England. This April. I'll see 'em if they're there.

Bob, what about the situation of American poets? Kenneth Roxroth has estimated that since 1900 about thirty American poets have committed suicide.

BD: Thirty poets! What about American housewives, mailmen, street cleaners, miners? Jesus Christ, what's so special about thirty people that are called poets? I've known some very good people that have committed suicide. One didn't do nothing but work in a gas station all his life. Nobody referred to him as poet, but if you're gonna call people like Robert Frost a poet, then I got to say this gas station boy was a poet, too.

Bob, we understand you're writing a book.

BD: Yeah, it's a funny book. I think it's coming out by spring.

What's it about?

BD: Angels.

Bob, to sum up – don't you have any important philosophy for the world?

BD: I don't drink hard liquor, if that's what you mean.

No. The world in general. You and the world?

BD: Are you kidding? The world don't need me. Christ, I'm only five feet ten. The world could get along fine without me. Don'cha know, everybody dies. It don't matter how important you think you are. Look at Shakespeare, Napoleon, Edgar Allan Poe, for that matter. They are all dead, right?

Well, Bob, in your opinion, then, is there one man who can save the world?

BD: Al Aronowitz.

March 1965
Maura Davis Interview, Woodstock, New York (Published 1966)

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 293-295.

Composed at Woodstock in March 1965, published in the men's magazine *Cavalier* in February 1966 and reprinted in the booklet *Positively Tie Dream*. Some sources write this up as a genuine interview but Paul Williams (*Performing Artist: The Music Of Bob Dylan*) credits this as a concocted interview, ghosted by Dylan and I really don't think you can fail to agree.

MD: Mr. Dye-lan, I'm from the New Buffalo Consolidated High School, and... uh... the question that... all the students want to know is, well, what's the most important thing in the world for you?

BD: Oh, my God! Do they really want to know that?

MD: Yes! They really want to know!

BD: Well, I'd say... uh... I'd say this tie I'm wearing right now.

MD: The WHAT?

BD: This tie I'm wearing right now. It's very important.

MD: Yee-e-es? Yes, yes!

BD: Because. For obvious reasons.

MD: Oh?

BD: Uh-huh. What would your students say if I said that all the students should wear a tie like this?

MD: Well... well, I think some of them would go right out and buy one. Where did you buy that tie, Mr Dye-lan?

BD: I got this in Buffalo.

MD: In Buffalo?

BD: Yes, in Buffalo, right down by the school.

MD: Oh, oh! Uh, well... this is NEW Buffalo.

BD: Oh, NEW Buffalo.

MD: In Michigan.

BD: Oh, this is Michigan! Excuse me!

MD: Not New York.

BD: I must have the wrong town.

Photographer interrupts:
Excuse me Mr Dylan, I don't want to lose this tie.

BD: Oh, are you losing your tie?

Photographer:
Mr. Dylan, I'd like to get your tie.

MD: (to Photographer) Dye-lan!

BD: (to Photographer) **Dye-lan, if you please!**

Photographer: (to Dylan)
Oh, I am sorry. Thank you very much sir.

BD: (to Photographer) **That's quite all right. Don't get that cloth over your head, I mean over the lens.**

MD: And the next thing I suppose they would want to know – I mean after I tell them this is... uh... just let me ask one question. They'll probably want to know, even though it's rude of me to ask. WHY is that the most important thing in the world that tie?

BD: Well. President Johnson used to wear a tie like this – before he got to be president.
MD: Ooooh!
BD: It's a sign of the common man, and I'm a common man.
MD: I see! I see!
BD: So I wear a tie like this – just to get involved.
MD: Ummmmm. Do you wear that tie when you write – when you're writing your songs?
BD: When I write? No, I usually wear this after I get done – after I finish something very good. To make myself really feel good, I put on the tie, and then I feel much better about it – and usually I have a hit.
MD: Really? Oh really? Oh, that's great! What songs did you write...
BD: Oh, I wrote... uh... I wrote... well, let's see. Well, after I wrote *Hard Rain's Gonna Fall* I wasn't sure if it was any good. So I put on the tie and I KNEW I had no problems from there on in. And it was a hit!
MD: Gosh!
BD: Yeah! Pete Seeger recorded it, yeah, and that was a hit.
MD: Yeah? Well, what are your plans for the future, Mr Dye-lan?
BD: Oh, I...
MD: Can I call you Bob?
BD: I'd appreciate it if you'd call me Mr Dye-lan.
MD: Oh, Okay.
BD: Most high school students do.
MD: All right.
BD: What was the question?
MD: Uh.. uh... oh yes, what are your plans for the future?
BD: Well, I'm gonna take off this tie.
MD: Yes.
BD: That's the immediate future, take off the tie.
MD: Oh, did you just finish writing something?
BD: I just finished writing something just before you came.
MD: I see.
BD: I just finished writing something, and you know that's why I got the tie on.
MD: Oh, I'm so glad! I might never have seen you in a tie if I hadn't come just when you finished writing something.
BD: Yeah, most people NEVER get to see me in this tie.
MD: Really? Really?
BD: Yeah, and I have some more ties.
MD: Different ones? I mean do you have different ones for different kind of songs?
BD: Oh, I have a whole lot of ties in my bedroom.
MD: Yeaaah?
BD: Would you like to go in my bedroom and see some more?
MD: Oh... more what?
BD: More TIES!
MD: Oh, oh! Are you going to write some songs?
BD: Oh, just might write a song – write a song RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU!
MD: You mean – wee that is, uh, with your tie off?
BD: With my tie off – and I'll put it right back on when I'm done. You'll be very safe.
MD: Oh, well, well, okay.

March 1965
Robert Shelton interview for *Cavalier*, New York City, NY

Source: *Cavalier* July 1965, reprinted in the *Royal Alber Hall 1966 UK Tour* program.

BOB DYLAN
This appraisal is reproduced from the July 1965 Issue of 'Cavalier' magazine with the gracious permission of the Editor and Mr. Robert Shelton, who wrote it.

A FEW OF US sensed, four years ago, when we first encountered him that he was going to be big. How big, none of us knew. Nor had any of us had much contact with genius before. We didn't know how difficult it is, sometimes, to get along with a genius poet, a young genius poet.

Even in those first days he couldn't sit still for more than fifteen minutes. Something was always going on, inside him. Outside, too. His leg would shake with nervous energy, almost like a spastic's. He would move in a chair just the way he later moved on stage, a sort of rhythmic bobbing from the waist up. He used to laugh a lot then, and we all called him Bobby. We figured, although he said he would have to leave, that he would be around for a long time. The scene is different since he left.

About four years ago a kid with a guitar floated into Manhattan from somewhere out West. There have been kids riding guitars into Greenwich Village for years, but this kid was special. In the four years since Bob Dylan "got off the subway from Hibbing, Minnesota," to borrow Jack Goddard's phrase, he has become the most widely sung, talked-about, written-about, argued-about figure in American folk music.

He shambled into town, ramblin' and tumblin' like a paperback edition of Woody Guthrie. Now, he's on his way to England, where people are getting as cultish about him as they were here two years ago. The Beatles have given him their public blessing. So now he rambles and tumbles like a hard-cover edition of Bob Dylan, with a preface by John Lennon, a foreword by Allen Ginsberg, footnotes by Chuck Berry, and a copyright by M. Witmark and Sons.

Dylan still speaks as mystifyingly about himself as he did four years ago, in nervous little packets of words that don't always hang together. I had supper with him at The Lion's Head in the Village, then we went to hear the Paul Butterfield blues band at the Village Gate. Leaving him, the impression persisted that after four years he was the last person in the world to reveal what he is thinking.

"All I do is write songs and sing them," Dylan said. **"I can't dig a ditch. I can't splice an electric wire. I'm no carpenter. All I do is write songs and sing them."** Opening a second bottle of Riesling, he went on, **"I'm lucky. Not because I make a lot of bread. But because I can be around groovy people. I don't have to fear anything and nobody around me has to fear anything. That's where it's at: bread, freedom and no fear."**

This was new for Bobby. In a certain sense he's always been afraid—of fame, of mediocrity, of demands on him, of being stereotyped or pigeonholed, of people with questions he wasn't ready to answer. That's one of the inconsistencies about him—the more courageous he is in his songs or his actions, the more he is privately afraid. For all his commitments to people and causes and philosophies, he finds it next to impossible to commit himself conversationally. A line in his new song, Outlaw Blues, typifies his attitude about questions he isn't ready to answer: "Don't ask me nothin' about nothin', I jes' might tell you the truth." [*Copyright © 1965 by M. Witmark and Sons. Used with permission.*]

Dylan is the sort of eccentric, quirky, offbeat personality writers love to encapsulate in a phrase: ragamuffin minstrel, the American Yevtushenko, Jimmie Dean with a guitar, beatnik bard, the hippie's Homer. But these catchwords don't indicate how his fiercely penetrating words have etched themselves on to the consciousness of a whole generation.

For those who take folk music seriously, Dylan is the most important new writer since Woody Guthrie. For those who don't, Dylan is more important than the folk revival. For a time, before it weighed too heavily on him, he was regarded by his audience as a leader of a campus religion who preached a sermon of anger, protest, nihilism, hope, anti-convention. For a time, his every word and action was weighed as if all were part of a charismatic catechism.

In four years, Dylan's songs, records and concert appearances have earned him nearly a million dollars. This complex, tortured, brilliant, overwrought, under-fed word-fountain has made friends in high places and influenced people he never met. He has alienated many with the corkscrew turns of his personal eccentricities.

Just turned 24, Dylan is contracted to write two books for Macmillan, is writing a play, and considering acting in a movie or two. He has been written up in *The New Yorker*, written down in *Newsweek*, been praised in *Vogue*, pictured in *Life*, covered by *Esquire*, "exposed" as a citybilly by *Little Sandy Review*, lectured to by *Sing Out!*, and alternately deified and villified by the campus press.

He has been censored off the *Ed Sullivan Show* over a song, and spent a brilliant hour on the *Les Crane Show* pulling the master of ceremony's leg. His songs have been recorded by dozens of persons from Marlene Dietrich to Stan Getz. His lyrics to Blowin' in the Wind have all but entered the language of the integration movement. He won an award that Bertrand Russell received the year before, but turned around and castigated the civil libertarians who presented the honor. He'd been holding, among other things, a bullwhip at a folk festival, enjoyed the "patronage" of Joan Baez, received the gift of a guitar from Johnny Cash. He attained some sort of Greenwich Village immortality by two scribblings on the walls of the construction site for the Brevoort East: "Bob Dylan doesn't know his ethno-musicology" and "Bob Dylan has acne."

As the object of more jealousy, envy, and partisanship than any singer-poet in memory, Dylan has spent two years under almost unbearable pressures. He has had to grow up in the fishbowl gaze of a national audience. He has had to do what few poets do—lead simultaneously a life as a stage performer. Partly because of this, his rise to fame was something less than graceful. It has taken him a few years to learn "to stand naked under unknowing eyes." It has taken him a few years to learn how to cope with what he regarded as "the dirt of gossip blowing into my face... and the dust of rumors covering me..." [from *Outlaw Blues*].

By and large, most of his detractors have ultimately undergone a conversion. One reviewer changed his position completely, saying, **"I was deaf,"** when he knocked a Dylan performance. Others have begrudgingly begun to see what the Dylan craze is all about. Although Allen Ginsberg has called Dylan "the most influential poet of his generation" and Henry Miller has befriended him, Dylan has yet to get his due from the literary community.

Most of his writing is designed for the stage and for either a declamatory or musical delivery, which may account for the indifference of the literary community, which similarly ignored the large corpus of writing by Woody Guthrie. One day, it can be predicted, the John Cialdis, the Louis Untermeyers, the Maxwell Geismars will address themselves to the topical-protest-poetic movement of the last five years when they attempt to estimate "the poetic situation." If and when they do, it is also predictable that they will find Dylan as the most important poetic voice of the time, a voice that helped stimulate a whole chorus of others who took to song-writing as their chief method of self-expression.

In the absence of such literary evaluations, the music commentators have stretched their own horizons to evaluate Dylan. One of the most articulate has been Ralph Gleason of The San Francisco Chronicle, who wrote:

"All of our values and all of our concepts and definitions and priorities are being challenged by the Miles Davises, the Bob Dylans and the rest of the poets and prophesiers of the new generation. I believe that Dylan's popularity is a very significant thing. I am convinced that Malvina Reynolds uttered a profound observation when she pointed out that the youth has been betrayed by good voices. And I am further convinced that a hard core of reality connects the music of Dylan, the beat of jazz, of contemporary poetry, painting, all the arts, in fact, with

the social revolution that has resulted in core and SNCC, Dick Gregory, James Baldwin and the rest."

For a poet capable of stunning unsettling imagery, for a moralizer capable of pointing fingers at the victimizers and miscreants, Dylan is curiously unable, in person, to hold up a mirror to himself. Strangely inarticulate in conversation, he has more to say if he can wrap it in humor or be purposefully outrageous: **"I'm in the show business now. I'm not in the folk-music business. That's where it's at. So is Roscoe Holcomb, Jean Ritchie, Little Orphan Annie, Dick Tracy, all the way up to President Johnson..."**

When he was still in the folk-music business, in February of 1961, he arrived in New York, partly to visit an early idol, Guthrie, and partly to make the Village scene. He was only 19 then, looking, with his thin pale face, as if parts of a choirboy and parts of a beatnik had gone astray in one of the tunnels from Jersey and been hastily reassembled before the Manhattan exit.

Dylan haunted the Village bars, coffeehouses and hootenannies. He got a pad on West Fourth Street. He did a few sets at the Gaslight, the Cafe Wha?, and an initial booking at Folk City in April. He was a green performer then, but something about his black Huck Finn corduroy cap and his tousled hair and ingenuous manner brought out the parent in many persons. Jack Elliott and Dave Van Ronk were happy to pass along their songs and their styles to this charming kid who drifted in from who knows where.

Of his background, he said virtually nothing. Later in a programme note, My Life in a Stolen Moment, he gave his personal history since leaving a Minnesota town:

"You can stand at one end of Hibbing on the main drag an' see clear past the city limits on the other end.

"Hibbing's a good ol' town.

"I ran away from it when I was 10, 12, 13, 15, 15½, 17 an' 18.

"I been caught and brought back all but once..." [*Copyright ® 1963 by Bob Dylan. Used with permission.*]

Dylan, and many another rebellious city folk singer, had tired of seeing their city limits. Restless and questing, they found a classroom's confines stifling, as did Dylan at the University of Minnesota—"I sat in science class an' flunked out for refusin' to watch a rabbit die..." [*from My Life in a Stolen Moment*].

He visited the ailing Guthrie. Despite the elder folk poet's illness and the 30 years that stood between them, ego and alter ego somehow managed to communicate. Besides the closeness with Van Ronk and Elliott, Dylan was befriended by another city intellectual who had "gone country," Harry Jackson, the painter. Jackson felt Dylan was a superb transplant of the Italian street musician. He tried to paint Dylan, but the latter kept moving and bobbing and shaking so much the portrait had to be finished without the model.

In the Village clubs, Dylan touched his audiences occasionally with his bluesy songs and his emerging poetic statements, but mostly he made them laugh. He had a curious set of Charlie Chaplin tramp mannerisms that were irresistible. His shamble would send him away past the target of the microphone, and there was a lot of stage business with his hat, his hair, his harmonica.

Dylan made his listeners laugh, and think, with some of his satirical "talking blues" monologues. Talking New York relieved his anger at coffeehouse owners who scorned his "hillbilly" sound. His Talking John Birch Society Blues ridiculed the paranoia of the ultraright. (Both Columbia Records and the Columbia Broadcasting System censored it.)

Dylan had been signed by Columbia's John Hammond in September 1961 after his third appearance at Folk City. Hammond, who had heard his son, also a musician, rave about Dylan, listened to Dylan at a studio session accompanying Carolyn Hester on his harmonica. After hearing only a few harmonica phrases and carefully appraising Dylan's appearance, Hammond went up to Dylan and shook his hand. In Dylan's other hand he carried his first newspaper review. Gambling on his years as a discoverer of great talent, Hammond offered to record Dylan without even hearing him sing.

Although there was a lot of early animosity toward Dylan, his coterie was strongly aware of how important he was. Suzy and Carla Rotolo fussed over him. The McGowans saw that he got a drink now and then. Mike Porco of Folk City offered to treat him to a haircut and some new clothes. Izzy Young sponsored his first concert, at Carnegie Recital Hall, which was attended by 53 persons. (In March 1965, Dylan and Joan Baez gave a concert in Philadelphia that attracted a record audience of 14,000.) Gil Turner and Mikki Isaacson saw that he ate enough. Van Ronk turned him on to François Villon. Barry Kornfeld had some music insights to share. Jean Redpath gave him a book of Yevtushenko's poems. Someone else introduced him to Lorca and Brecht. Albert Grossman bought him some books by Martin Buber.

Grossman, the portly soft-spoken personal manager, was the only manager to view Dylan's potential and to act on it. A prodigious star maker, Grossman has clients who swear by him and recording officials and club managers who swear at him. In the fall of 1963, when fame and some personal crises nearly undid Dylan, Grossman helped keep the singer going. **"If it wasn't for Albert,"** Dylan says today, **"I could be on the Bowery now. Albert's the greatest manager that ever lived in the whole century** (sic) **of the world."**

Despite the enthusiasm over his first recording, it barely caused a ripple on the mass audience. Dylan spent most of 1962 writing songs, getting to know many of the people in the Southern integration movement, and working with the members of the Broadside magazine topical-song movement. He made a brief appearance at Carnegie Hall in the fall of 1962 on a "hoot" sponsored by *Sing Out!*.

The big change occurred in the spring of 1963. At the suggestion of Pete Seeger, Harold Leventhal put Dylan on in a solo concert at Town Hall. Reviews in Billboard magazine and *The New York Times* were ecstatic. He appeared at the Monterey (California) Folk Festival, and Joan Baez became a Dylan convert. She invited him to her Carmel home. ("I feel it," she said later. "But Dylan can say it. He's phenomenal." As their mutual admiration society grew, he said, **"She sings for me,"** and she said, "He speaks for me.")

This buildup was cumulative, but the turning point was the Peter, Paul and Mary recording of Blowin' in the Wind and the Newport Folk Festival. Partially of conviction and partially of an astute public relations sense, Grossman's clients, Peter, Paul and Mary, introduced the song at concerts as being written by "the most important folk singer in America today. He has his finger on the pulse of his generation."

By the time of the Newport Festival that July, Dylan's name was on everyone's lips. He became restless with photographers and reporters who wanted him to pose and speak. (**"You want my time,"** he snapped impatiently. **"There isn't time to give you my time."**) A Channel 5 telecast on freedom songs and a series of unannounced appearances at Baez concerts in the East kept the momentum rolling. A solo concert at Carnegie Hall that fall attracted a young audience that acted as if they were going to church, eating up the words of the charisma kid as if he were Jesus in denim and suede. But even older listeners were impressed. "Such passion!" Ronnie Gilbert of The Weavers remarked after the concert.

If Dylan's voice has been a source of controversy (it has been likened to a bear's, to a tubercular patient's wail over a sanitarium wall, to the sound of a dog with its leg in barbed wire), its homely plaintiveness tends to grow on most listeners. His songs have been controversial every step of the circuitous road he travels. The traditionalists objected to his being so socially conscious. Then the social-determinists became irritated when he turned to personal statement wrapped in murky symbolism. The jockey crowd criticised him for losing his sense of humor, and the serious crowd objected to his fantasy satires. Now that he is part of the Beatles' backlash, using electrical background instruments and reworking the rhythm and blues tunes of Chuck Berry, non-rock 'n' roll fans are annoyed.

For a little while, Dylan tried to defend his musical approaches. He wrote of his then-predominantly topical approach a credo that will stand up no matter where he goes musically:

I'm singin' and writin'
        what's on my mind now
What's in my own head

and what's in my own heart
I'm singin' for me an'
a million other me's that've been
forced t'gether by the same
feelin'—
I'm writin' an' singin' for me
An' I'm writin' an' singin' for
you...

Probably the biggest storm over Dylan's songs was predicated by an ill-founded hatchet job by *Newsweek* that implied he might be a song-stealer. Actually, only occasionally did he compose his own melodies but would build, in the perfectly acceptable folk process, on other melodies. Thus Blowin' in the Wind is his reworking of Dolores Dixon's arrangement of the traditional spiritual, No More Auction Block for Me. Hollis Brown is set to the traditional Pretty Polly. Fare Thee Well is set to The Leaving of Liverpool, and Masters of War is built on the melody of Nottamun Town. With God on Our Side is a revamping of Dominic Behan's Patriot Game, in itself a rehash of the traditional Merry Month of May.

Although Dylan has borrowed, adapted, or originated some striking melodies, it is as a lyricist-poet that he bears the most import. Despite many rumors, the only litigation he has gone through was a friendly suit by his close friend and admirer, Paul Clayton, over the melody of Don't Think Twice, which Clayton had already adapted from tradition.

Some of Dylan's most powerful works are almost chants against guitar-strumming. Who Killed Davey Moore, A Hard Rain's A'Gonna Fall, and It's All Right Ma are among his best works despite their lack of melodic profiles. Never will I forget the steaming summer afternoon when Dylan pulled out of his pocket the poem inspired by the shooting of Medgar Evers, the Mississippi NAACP leader. Here was a concise, eloquent tribute to a fallen Negro martyr that simultaneously explained how the white Southerner was also being victimized. He called it Only a Pawn in Their Game.

The hubbub about the origins of some Dylan melodies would never have gone so far if he had been able to say something in his own defence about his working methods. But, here again, a curious inarticulateness crept over him. As in his dealings with the press, he almost invites animosity as if he knows he is right and can't expect a fair break from anything that resembles authority or the Establishment. Two highly sympathetic writer friends, Al Aronowitz and Pete Karmon, dropped articles they were writing on Dylan because of his expressed contempt for much of what is written about him.

This truculence toward authority is firmly rooted in the irreverence of The Beatles and the Dead End Kids before them. Much as some of the adults around the folk movement find this thumb-at-the-nose attitude of post-adolescent revolt hard to take, it is just there that the movement gets much of its motive power. Thus the rebels and the disbelievers in authority have found in Dylan a practicing rebel disbeliever with whom they can identify.

Despite the various turns and detours that Dylan has taken in his song writing, nothing seems likely to halt his creative flood, unless it be his own self-destructiveness. Like other poets, from Rimbaud to Dylan Thomas to Hank Williams to Charlie Parker, Dylan has a kindred genius for afflicting his body and health. At 24, he already has a prematurely tired wizened look.

He'll brush aside the concern of his friends, indicating that everybody dies sometime. So, the charisma kid is just going to keep going his own way, no matter what anyone says about him or his songs. He'll just keep ramblin' and tumblin' down the road, looking for his own compass points before he tries to lead anyone else down his paths.

20 March 1965
Max Jones and Bob Dawbarn interview for *Melody Maker*

Source: *Melody Maker*, March 20, 1964;
reprinted in *NME Originals: Bob Dylan and the Folk Rock Boom 1964-1974*, p. 11.

DYLAN v. DONOVAN
MELODY MAKER, March 20, 1965—Page 3

DOUBLE EXPOSURE ON THE FOLK SCENE

FOLK is busting out in all directions—and in particular into the Pop 50. And the two spearheads of the folk invasion into pop fields is being led by Bob Dylan in America and Donovan in Britain.

The Box Office for Dylan's London concert at the Royal Albert Hall on May 10, opened on Saturday. By Monday, his agent Tito Burns, was telling the MM: "There has been a tremendous rush for tickets and I predict they will all have gone by the end of this week.

"And remember there are 5,000 seats with a top price of £1."

IS HE GOOD?

Dylan's first single, "Times They Are A Changing", reaches the shops tomorrow (Friday). Donovan's first record, "Catch The Wind" was released last Friday and has already jumped into the Pop 50 at 36. He has just signed a contract that could earn him £25,000 this year.

The MM spoke to both stars this week. Dylan was forced to admit he had never heard of Donovan. **"Is he good?"** asked the American star.

Donovan has certainly heard of Dylan. "It should be good when Dylan comes over," he enthused. "I've bought my ticket to see him. It will be great to see him splashed across the papers.

"Dylan's record should be big, I have heard it, of course—it's off his LP and it's a great number.

"I think the bit about me imitating Dylan is beginning to pass over—although there are probably some fierce folkers still on about it."

Is Dylan worried at the thought of being copied by other artists?

"It doesn't bother me" he told the MM.

We put to him a question from Donovan: "Do they credit you with as little intelligence as they credit me with in Britain?"

Said Dylan: **"In the USA, I don't think they credit me with having any intelligence, whatever that word means, but I think they do in England."**

Donovan is still regarded with suspicion by the British folk world. Does he plan to work any folk clubs?

"They can't afford me" he laughed. "I would like to do a few of them to show there are no hard feelings."

What difference has success made to their lives?

"None" says Dylan. **"I stay out of it."**

"None, really" says Donovan, "I'm not buying a car or anything like that. But I am planning to get a flat."

Donovan has now written some 50 songs and is in demand by other recording artists, Dylan isn't interested in writing for other people.

"I don't really write for other people at all" says Bob. **"I did 12 or 13 new songs for the album that's just coming out. And I guess I have another four or five new ones about recorded for the next record."**

Dylan has fast finished writing a book on Hollywood with photographer Barry Feinstein.

"It will be out in the Fall," he told the MM. **"I'm down in the country now, working on another book. I'm putting it together. It's not really a novel, just bits of information. It's called 'Bob Dylan Off The Record'."**

"I'm also doing some concerts with Joan Baez before I get over to Britain. And would you please say hello to Martin and Dorothy Carthy."

Is there going to be a folk boom?

"I don't know what that is really, a boom," hedged Dylan.

"I don't think there is really a chance yet," said Donovan. "It could happen this year but it will come through slowly, not in a sudden, big way. But there are certainly some interesting developments in the pop charts."

Dylan said be didn't know "*Times They Are A Changing*" was being released in Britain. Does be hope for a hit with it?

"Not really" he says. **"I don't really have my connection with it now."**

Whatever they say, a great deal more is going to be heard of both folk D's during 1965. —BOB DAWBARN and MAX JONES.

26 March 1965
Paul J Robbins Interview, Santa Monica, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 55-62.

This is a most unusual interview for the time. This is a very open and straightforward Dylan answering the questions at a time when other interviewers were being treated to Bob's more surreal approach. At the same time, Bob was also up to manufacturing interviews (Hentoff, Goddard and Maura Davis) and for these and other reasons some considered this interview not to be genuine for a while.

Paul Jay Robbins, a *Los Angeles Free Press* journalist met Dylan at a party given by Columbia records on March 26th 1965, the day before the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium concert. According to Heylin "They jointly compose a brief absurdist interview which includes such profound statements as 'I know a lot of people that are really President Johnson in a crash helmet when they say they're really Mickey Rooney in a jock strap'. They agree to meet the next afternoon for a proper interview." Note below how the interview proper starts off with – "I don't know whether to do a serious interview or carry on in that absurdist way we talked last night."

The interview appeared in three parts in the *Los Angeles Free Press* on September 10th, 17th and 24th. In Pickering's *A Commemoration* this is referred to as a two-part interview omitting the 10th, but *Praxis-One* lists all three dates. It has been re-printed a number of times, appearing in Detroit's *Fifth Estate* in July 1966, soon to be reprinted in *In-Beat* in August 1966 and in *Hullabaloo* the following year. A tape is rumored.

PR: I don't know whether to do a serious interview or carry on in that absurdist way we talked last night.

BD: It'll be the same thing anyway, man.

PR: Yeah, Okay... If you are a poet and write words arranged in some sort of rhythm, why do you switch at some point and write lyrics in a song so that you're singing the words as part of a Gestalt presence?

BD: Well, I can't define that word poetry, I wouldn't even attempt it. At one time I thought that Robert Frost was poetry, other times I thought that Allen Ginsberg was poetry, sometimes I thought Francois Villon was poetry – but poetry isn't really confined to the printed page. Hey, then again, I don't believe in saying "Look at that girl walking! Isn't that poetry?" I'm not going to get insane about it. The lyrics to the songs... just so happens that it might be a little stranger than in most songs. I find it easy to write songs. I been writing songs for a long time and the words to the songs aren't written out just for the paper; they're written as you can read it, you dig. If you take whatever there is to the song away – the beat, the melody – I could still recite it. I see nothing wrong with songs you can't do that with either – songs that, if you took the beat and the melody away, they wouldn't stand up. Because they're not supposed to do that, you know. Songs are songs... I don't believe in expecting too much out of any one thing.

PR: Whatever happened to Blind Boy Grunt?

BD: I was doing that four years ago. Now there's a lot of people writing songs on protest subjects. But it's taken some kind of a weird step. Hey, I'd rather listen to Jimmy Reed or Howlin' Wolf, man, or the Beatles, or Francois Hardy, than I would listen to any protest song singers – although I haven't heard all the protest song singers there are. But the ones I've heard – there's this very emptiness which is like a song written "Let's hold

hands and everything will be grand". I see no more to it than that. Just because someone mentions the word "bomb", I'm not going to go "Aaiee!" and start clapping.

PR: Is it that they just don't work any more?

BD: It's not that it don't work, it's that there are a lot of people afraid of the bomb, right. But there are a lot of other people who're afraid to be seen carrying a *Modern Screen* magazine down the street, you know. Lot of people afraid to admit that they like Marlon Brando movies... Hey, it's not that they don't work anymore but have you ever thought of a place where they do work? What exactly does work?

PR: They give a groovy feeling to the people who sing them, I guess that's about it. But what does work is the attitude, not the song. And there's just another attitude called for.

BD: Yeah, but you have to be very hip to the fact about that attitude – you have to be hip to communication. Sure, you can make all sorts of protest songs and put them on a Folkways record. But who hears them? The people that do hear them are going to be agreeing with you anyway. You aren't going to get somebody to hear it who doesn't dig it. People don't listen to things they don't dig. If you can find a cat that can actually say "Okay, I'm a changed man because I heard this one thing – or I just saw this one thing...". Hey, it don't necessarily happen that way all the time. It happens with a collage of experience which somebody can actually know by instinct what's right and wrong for him to do. Where he doesn't actually have to feel guilty about anything. A lot of people can act out of guilt. They act because they think somebody's looking at them. No matter what it is. There's people who do anything because of guilt...

PR: And you don't want to be guilty?

BD: It's not that I'm *not* guilty. I'm not any more guilty than you are. Like, I don't consider any elder generation guilty. I mean, they're having these trials at Nuremberg, right? Look at that and you can place it out. Cats say "I had to kill all those people or else they'd kill me" Now, who's to try them for that? Who are these judges that have got the right to try a cat? How do you know they wouldn't do the same thing?

PR: This may be a side trip, but this thing about the Statute of Limitations running out and everybody wants to extend it? You remember, in *Animal Farm*, what they wrote on the wall? "All animals are equal." But later they added "...but some are more equal than others." It's the same thing in reverse. That some are less equal than others. Like nazis are really criminals, so let's really get them; change any law just to nail them all.

BD: Yeah, all that shit runs in the same category. Nobody digs revenge, right? But you have these cats from Israel who, after twenty years, are still trying to catch these cats, who're old cats, man, who have escaped. God knows they aren't going to go anywhere, they're not going to do anything. And you have these cats from Israel running around catching them. Spending twenty years out of their lives. You take that job away from them and they're no more or less than a baker. He's got his whole life tied up in one thing. It's a one-thought thing, without anything between: "That's what it is, and I'm going to get it". Anything between gets wiped all away. I can't make that, but I can't really put it down. Hey: I can't put anything down, because I don't have to be around any of it. I don't have to put people down which I don't like, because I don't have to be around any of those people. Of course there is the giant great contradiction of What Do You Do. Hey, I don't know what you do, but all I can do is cast aside all the things not to do. I don't know where it's at once in a while, all I know is where it's not at. And as long as I know that, I don't really have to know, myself, where's it at. Everybody knows where it's at once in a while, but nobody can walk around all the time in a complete Utopia. Dig poetry. You were asking about poetry? Man, poetry is just bullshit, you know? I don't know about other countries, but in this one it's a total massacre. It's not poetry at all. People don't read poetry in this country – if they do, it offends them; they don't dig it. You go to school, man, and what kind of poetry do you read? You read Robert Frost's "The Two Roads", you read T. S. Eliot – you read all that bullshit and that's just bad, man, It's not good. It's not anything hard, it's just soft-boiled egg shit. And then, on top

of it, they throw Shakespeare at some kid who can't read Shakespeare in high school, right? Who digs reading, Hamlet, man? All they give you is Ivanhoe, Silas Marner, Tale of Two Cities – and they keep you away from things which you should do. You shouldn't even be there in school. You should find out from people. Dig! That's where it all starts. In the beginning – like from 13 to 19 – that's where all the corruption is. These people all just overlook it, right? There's more V. D. in people 13 to 19 than there is in any other group, but they ain't ever going to say so. They're never going to go into the schools and give shots. But that's where it's at. It's all a hype, man.

PR: Relating all this: if you put it in lyrics instead of poetry, you have a higher chance of hitting the people who have to be hit?

BD: I do, but I don't expect anything from it, you dig? All I can do is be me – whoever that is – for those people that I do play to, and not come on with them, tell them I'm something I'm not. I'm not going to tell them I'm the Great Cause Fighter or the Great Lover or the Great Boy Genius or whatever. Because I'm not, man. Why mislead them? That's all just Madison Avenue selling me, but it's not really selling me, 'cause I was hip to it before I got there.

PR: Which brings up another thing. All the folk magazines and many folk people are down on you. Do they put you down because you changed or...

BD: It's that I'm successful and they want to be successful, man. It's jealousy. Hey, anybody, with any kind of knowledge at all would know by instinct what's happening here. Somebody who doesn't know that, is still hung up with success and failure and good and bad... maybe he doesn't have a chick all the time... stuff like that. But I can't use comments, man. I don't take nothing like that seriously. If somebody praises me and says "How groovy you are!", it doesn't mean nothing to me, because I can usually sense where that person's at. And it's no compliment if someone who's a total freak comes up and says "How groovy you are!" And it's the same if they don't dig me. Other kinds of people don't have to say anything because, when you come down to it, it's all what's happening in the moment which counts. Who cares about tomorrow and yesterday? People don't live there, they live now.

PR: I have a theory, which I've been picking up and shaking out every so often. When I spoke with the Byrds, they were saying the same thing as I am saying – a lot of people are saying – you're talking it. It's why we have new so-called rock n' roll sound emerging, it's a synthesis of all things a...

BD: It's further than that, man. people know nowadays more than before. They've had so much to look at by now and know the bullshit of everything. People now don't even care about going to jail. So what? You're still with yourself as much as if you're out on the streets. There's still those who don't care about anything, but I got to think that anybody who doesn't hurt anybody, you can't put that person down, you dig, if that person's happy doing that.

PR: But what if they freeze themselves into apathy? What if they don't care about anything at all anymore?

BD: Whose problem is that? Your problem or theirs? No, it's not that, it's that nobody can learn by somebody else showing them or teaching them. People got to learn by themselves, going through something which relates. Sure, you say how do you make somebody know something... people know it by themselves; they can go through some kind of scene with other people and themselves which somehow will come out somewhere and it's grind into them and be them. And all that just comes out of them somehow when they're faced up to the next thing.

PR: It's like taking in until the time comes to put out, right. But people who don't care don't put anything out. It's a whole frozen thing where nothing's happening anywhere; it's just like the maintenance of status quo, of existing circumstances, whatever they are...

BD: People who don't care? Are you talking about gas station attendants or a Zen doctor, man? Hey, there's a lot of people who don't care; a lot don't care for different reasons.

A lot care about some things and not about others, and some who don't care about anything – it's just up to me not to let them bring me down and not to bring them down. It's like the whole world has a little thing: it's being taught that when you get up in the morning, you have to go out and bring somebody down. You walk down the street and, unless you've brought somebody down, don't come home today, right? It's a circus world.

PR: So who is it that you write and sing for?

BD: Not writing and singing for anybody, to tell you the truth. Hey, really, I don't care what people say. I don't care what they make me seem to be or what they tell other people I am. If I did care about that, I'd tell you; I really have no concern with it. I don't even come in contact with these people. Hey, I dig people, though. But if somebody's going to come up to me and ask me some questions which have been on his mind for such a long time, all I can think of is "Wow, man, what else can be in that person's head besides me? Am I that important, man, to be in a person's head for such a long time he's got to know this answer?" I mean, can that really straighten him out – if I tell him something? Hey, come on...

PR: A local disc jockey, Les Claypool, went through a whole thing on you one night, just couldn't get out of it. For maybe 45 minutes, he'd play a side of yours and then an ethnic side in which it was demonstrated that both melodies were the same. After each pair he'd say, "Well, you see what's happening... This kid is taking other people's melodies; he's not all that original. Not only that", he'd say, "but his songs are totally depressing and have no hope".

BD: Who's Les Claypool?

PR: A folk jockey out here who has a long talk show on Saturday nights and an hour one each night, during which he plays highly ethnic sides?

BD: He played those songs? He didn't play something hopeful?

PR: No, he was loading it to make his point. Anyway, it brings up an expected question: why do you use melodies that are already written?

BD: I used to do that when I was more or less in folk. I knew the melodies; they were already there. I did it because I liked the melodies. I did it when I really wasn't that popular and the songs weren't reaching that many people, and everybody around dug it. Man. I never introduced a song, "Here's the song I've stole the melody from, someplace". For me it wasn't that important; still isn't that important. I don't care about the melodies, man, the melodies are all traditional anyway. And if anybody wants to pick that out and say "That's Bob Dylan", that's their thing, not mine. I mean if they want to think that. Anybody with any sense at all, man, he says that I haven't any hope... Hey, I got faith. I know that there are people who're going to know that's total bullshit. I know the cat is just up tight. He hasn't really gotten into a good day and he has to pick on something. Groovy. He has to pick on me? Hey, if he can't pick on me, he picks on someone else, it don't matter. He doesn't step on me, 'cause I don't care. He's not coming up to me on the street and stepping on my head, man. Hey, I've only done that with very few of my songs, anyway. And then when I don't do it, everybody says they're rock & roll melodies. You can't satisfy the people -you just can't. You got to know, man; they just don't care about it.

PR: Why is rock & roll coming in and folk music going out?

BD: Folk music destroyed itself. Nobody destroyed it. Folk music is still here, if you want to dig it. It's not that it's going in or out. It's all the soft mellow shit, man, that's just being replaced by something that people know there is now. Hey, you must've heard rock n' roll long before the Beatles, you must've discarded rock n' roll around 1960. I did that in 1957. I couldn't make it as a rock & roll singer then. There were too many groups. I used to play piano. I made some records, too.

PR: Okay, you got a lot of bread now. And your way of life isn't like it was four or five years ago. It's much grander. Does that kind of thing tend to throw you off?

BD: Well, the transition never came from working at it. I left where I'm from because there's nothing there. I come from Minnesota, there was nothing there. I'm not going to fake it and say I went out to see the world. Hey when I left there, man, I knew one thing: I had to get out of there and not come back. Just from my senses I knew there was something more than Walt Disney movies. I was never turned on or off by money. I never considered the fact of money as really that important. I could always play the guitar, you dig, and make friends – or fake friends. A lot of other people do other things and get to eat and sleep that way. Lot of people do a lot of things just to get around. You can find cats who get very scarred, right? Who get married and settle down. But, after somebody's got something and sees it all around him, so he doesn't have to sleep out in the cold at night, that's all. The only thing is he don't die. But is he happy? There's nowhere to go. Okay, so I get the money, right? First of all, I had to move out of New York. Because everybody was coming down to see me – people which I didn't really dig. People coming in from weird-ass places. And I would think, for some reason, that I had to give them someplace to stay and all that. I found myself not really being by myself but just staying out of things I wanted to go to because people I knew would go there.

PR: Do you find friends – real friends – are they recognizable anymore?

BD: Oh, sure, man, I can tell somebody I dig right away. I don't have to go through anything with anybody. I'm just lucky that way.

PR: Back to protest songs. The IWW's work is over now and the unions are pretty well established. What about the civil rights movement?

BD: Well, it's okay. It's proper. It's not "Commie" anymore. *Harper's Bazaar* can feature it, you can find it on the cover of *Life*. But when you get beneath it, like anything, you find there's bullshit tied up in it. The Negro Civil Rights Movement is proper now, but there's more to it than what's in *Harper's Bazaar*. There's more to it than picketing in Selma, right? There's people living in utter poverty in New York. And then again, you have this big Right to Vote. Which is groovy. You want all these Negroes to vote? Okay, I can't go over the boat and shout "Hallelujah" only because they want to vote. Who are they going to vote for? Just politicians; same as the white people put in their politicians. Anybody that gets into politics is a little greaky anyway. Hey, they're just going to vote, that's all they're going to do. I hate to say it like that, make it sound hard, but it's going to boil down to that.

PR: What about the drive for education?

BD: Education? They're going to school and learn about all the things the white private schools teach. The catechism, the whole thing. What're they going to learn? What's this education? Hey, the cat's much better off never going to school. The only thing against him is he can't be a doctor or a judge. Or he can't get a good job with the salesman's company. But that's the only thing wrong. If you want to say it's good that he gets an education and goes out and gets a job like that, groovy. I'm not going to do it.

PR: In other words, the formal intake of factual knowledge...

BD: Hey, I have no respect for factual knowledge, man. I don't care what anybody knows, I don't care if somebody's a walking encyclopedia. Does that make him nice to talk to? Who cares if Washington was even the first president of the United States? You think anybody has actually ever been helped with this kind of knowledge?

PR: Maybe through a test. Well, what's the answer?

BD: There aren't any answers, man. Or any questions. You must read my book... there's a little part in there about that. It evolves into a thing where it mentions words like "Answer". I couldn't possibly rattle off the words for these, because you'd have to read the whole book to see these specific words or Question and Answer. We'll have another interview after you read the book.

PR: Yeah, you have a book coming out. What about it? The title?

BD: Tentatively, *Bob Dylan Off the Record*. But they tell me there's already books out with that off the record title. The book can't really be titled, that's the kind of book it is. I'm also going to write the reviews for it.

PR: Why write a book instead of lyrics?

BD: I've written some songs which are kind of far out, a long continuation of verses, stuff like that – but I haven't really gotten into writing a completely free song. Hey, you dig something like cut-ups? I mean, like William Burroughs?

PR: Yeah, there's a cat in Paris who published a book with no pagination. The book comes in a box and you throw it in the air and, however it lands, you read it like that.

BD: Yeah, that's where it's at. Because that's what it means, anyway. Okay, I wrote the book because there's a lot of stuff in there I can't possibly sing... all the collages. I can't sing it because it gets too long or it goes too far out. I can only do it around a few people who would know. Because the majority of the audience – I don't care where they're from, how hip they are – I think it would just get totally lost. Something that had no rhyme, all cut up, no nothing, except something happening, which is words.

PR: You wrote the book to say something?

BD: Yeah, but certainly not any kind of profound statement. The book don't begin or end.

PR: But you had something to say. And you wanted to say it to somebody.

BD: Yeah, I said it to myself. Only, I'm lucky, because I could put it into a book. Now somebody else is going to be allowed to see what I said to myself.

PR: You have four albums out now, with a fifth any day. Are these albums sequential in the way that you composed and sung them?

BD: Yeah, I've got about two or three albums that I've never recorded, which are lost songs. They're old songs; I'll never record them. Some very groovy songs. Some old songs which I've written and sung maybe once in a concert and nobody else ever heard them. There are a lot of songs which would fill in between the records. It was growing from the first record to the second, then a head change on the third. And the fourth. The fifth I can't even tell you about.

PR: So if I started with Album One, Side One, Band One, I could truthfully watch Bob Dylan grow?

BD: No, you could watch Bob Dylan laughing to himself. Or you could see Bob Dylan going through changes. That's really the most.

PR: What do you think of the Byrds? Do you think they're doing something different?

BD: Yeah, they could. They're doing something really new now. It's like a danceable Bach sound. Like *Bells of Rhymney*. They're cutting across all kinds of barriers which most people who sing aren't even hip to. They know it all. If they don't close their minds, they'll come up with something pretty fantastic.

27 March 1965
Max Jones telephone interview for *Melody Marker*

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reprinted in *NME Originals: Bob Dylan and the Folk Rock Boom 1964-1974*, p. 12.

DYLAN: FASTEST SELL-OUT YET
MM, 27 March 1965, page 7

Signs are that Bob Dylan's coming British tour will be among the quickest sell outs known to local promoters, a healthy omen for those many who believe Dylan to be one of the most creative talents to appear on the folk scene in years. Only two box offices have opened so far. Both sold all their tickets in double quick time. London's Albert Hall started selling on the Saturday. By mid-day Monday, they had standing room only, and by four o'clock, they had sold out completely. Tickets for Manchester's Free Trade Hall were snapped up almost as swiftly.

The next box offices to open are at Sheffield City Hall and Leicester's De Montfort Hall. Readers in those parts anxious to see Dylan are advised not to hang about. In view of this current commotion, it is ironical to consider that Bob Dylan was here in 1962 – doing a play – when he visited the Troubadour and other London folk clubs without apparently making much of an impression. Dylan is in many ways a fantastic figure – a good deal of fantasy creeps into a song like '*A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*' – and fantastic figures attract legends and fanciful notions. My telephone conversation with him went like this:

MJ: I hear you have a very successful record out there?
BD: Oh, do I?
MJ: Yes, I'm told it's a tremendous success called '*Subterranean Homesick Blues*'. What's it about?
BD: It's just a little story really. It's not about anything.
MJ: Has this single made any difference yet?
BD: No.
MJ: Do you realise that you've started something of a cult and The Beatles have been praising your work?
BD: Not really.
MJ: Did you notice George Harrison's comment that they admire "the Dylan way of life?"
BD: No, I didn't. I think that's kind of weird.
MJ: What do you think of The Beatles, as artists and people?
BD: Oh, I think they're the best. They're artists and they're people.

— Max Jones

Late April 1965
Fred Billany Interview, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 297-299.

Dylan arrived at London Airport by flight TWA 702 on April 26th to commence his 1965 UK Tour. He was chauffeured to the Savoy Hotel London by Austin Princess, arriving there at around 11:00 p.m. He stayed in his £70 per week (a lot of money in those days) suite (Room 208) through to the morning of April 30th when he left for Sheffield. Throughout this time he gave a succession of interviews and press conferences one of which was to Fred Billany of the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*. The interview was published in Newcastle Upon Tyne on May 4th.

A WANDERING TROUBADOUR – WITH NO MESSAGE FOR ANYONE...

BOB DYLAN is the folk singer whose exotic songs, mostly written by himself, carry a plea for freedom in the widest possible sense.

The support he commands from millions of young people both here and in America has developed into a cult which challenged the ecstatic admiration accorded to the Beatles.

Twenty-three-year-old Bob Dylan – he appears in Newcastle on Thursday – is the symbol of a restless age, a 1965 phenomenon, who has described himself as a wondering troubadour linking the poetry of his songs with times of disillusionment.

He says he has no philosophy about anything. I talked to this shambling, tousle-haired young man at the Savoy Hotel, London. He wore jeans, boots, an open-necked shirt, the colors of which rival anything a rainbow can produce.

There seemed never to be a second when a cigarette was not between his lips and he cheerfully admitted that he smokes at least 80 a day.

"I have no message for anyone," he told me. **"My songs are only me talking to myself."**

NERVOUS

As he spoke he moved nervously from foot to foot, as if he were starting the first steps of a jig. **"I don't want to influence people in any way. It is other people who influence me about life."**

He is conscious of the fact that he is a performer who is not without his critics, of whom he declares: **"They would lose their jobs if they did not criticize something."**

But he came to Britain last week knowing that he has filled the Albert Hall with his supporters on two consecutive nights. There was almost a public riot to get tickets to hear him and it is the youngsters who will pack this vast and historic hall when Dylan walks on stage to sing.

Bob Dylan has a thin and pale face with sad blue eyes. He was born on May 24, 1941, in Duluth, a former mining town in Minnesota.

He ran away from home at least seven times and eventually went to live in South Dakota and New Mexico. He studied at Minnesota University but it was an uneasy relationship with his tutors.

IN NEW YORK

After six months he left going to New York to see his lifelong idol Woody Herman (sic), the notable American musician and lyricist.

Dylan sang in Greenwich Village and then someone at the BBC heard about him and brought him to London to appear in the television production of *Mad House in Castle Street*.

He also appeared in London clubs, later returning to Britain to sing at a Festival Hall concert which is almost scorned by his admirers.

What makes Dylan tick? What is his appeal?

There is a hint of foreboding in his songs which give them a strange appealing note. However, some of his words to my mind at least, can be a little incomprehensible. But there is little to puzzle anybody in the song, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. Dylan sings:

> **"the order is rapidly changing,**
> **the first one now will later be last."**

He has the power to make an audience listen. They do not scream and yell while he is singing. His very presence disciplines them into silence and the cheers and applause come only at the end of each number.

Dylan's voice has a dry and bitter quality. He has been identified as a champion of civil rights (some of his songs are about this subject) but ask him to talk about politics and he gives a short sharp reply which indicates in no uncertain manner that he is not very fond of the subject.

Some of his songs tell of the world after the atom bomb and he has written one about boxers who get killed while fighting in "the square ring."

Yet Dylan now says he is **"bored by the atom bomb"** and also with the American Government.

He told me that one of this main aims in life is **"to get a glimpse of everything, the good things and the bad things."**

Does he ever worry and if so what about? **"I worry about keeping my sanity but my idea of sanity maybe different to that of other people."**

Later Dylan said: **"I'm on my own. I don't want to hurt anybody. I just go along. I'm not going anywhere but I'm changing."**

For a second or two I thought he was quoting from one of his new songs.

Dylan may be best summed up in his own words: **"You either love or hate me."**

One thing is certain: you can't ignore him. He is a remarkable fellow.

26 April 1965
London Press Conference, Savoy Hotel, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 981-982.

Taken initially from D.A. Pennebaker's book *Dont Look Back* (Ballantine Books).

Do you think that a lot of young people who buy your records understand a single word of what you're singing?

BD: Sure.

You reckon they do?

BD: Sure.

Why do you say they do?

How can you be so sure? They're quite complicated songs aren't they?

BD: Yeah, but they understand them.

How do you know they understand them? Have they told you that they do?

BD: They told me. Haven't you ever heard that song *She Said So*...

You've got it wrong (Laughing)

Do you think that they understand you because they don't want to see you?

Dylan ignores the question.

Would you say that you cared about people particularly?

BD: Well, yeah, but you know... I mean, we all have our own definitions of all those words... care and people.

Well, but surely we know what people are.

BD: Do we?

You sound angry in your songs. I mean, are you protesting against certain things you're angry about?

BD: I'm not angry. I'm a delightful sort of person.

I see, thank you very much.

BD: Okay.

Do you ever read the Bible?

BD: What about the Bible?

Do you ever read the Bible?

BD: Um... no.

Have you read it?

BD: Have I ever? I've glanced through it...

Because you see, a lot of the things you say.

BD: I've glanced through it. I haven't read it.

BD: This is the part where I don't write. You know, anything that happens I'll just remember, you know. When I'm Jiving my own thing, doing what I do, this is never around me. I mean, I accept everything. I accept this, you know, I'll accept...

Why?

BD: Well, because it's here, 'cause it's real, 'cause it exists just as much as the busses outside exist. I mean, I can't turn myself off to it because if I try to fight it you know, I'm just going to end up going insane faster than I eventually will go insane... if I do go insane... when and if the time comes for me to... go... in... sane.

26 April 1965
London Airport Press Conference, London, England

Source: *Dont Look Back* by D.A. Pennebaker, Ballantine Books, Inc., 1968, p. 21.

In a waiting room at London Airport.

BD: Well, what's happening here? What are we going to do?
How long is it since you were last in London?
BD: About a year.
What's the lightbulb for?
Dylan holds up an enormous industrial lightbulb.
BD: What's the lightbulb for? I thought you would ask me that. No, I usually carry a lightbulb. Somebody gave it to me, you know.
Sorry, I didn't quite catch the answer.
BD: Someone gave it to me... a very affectionate friend.
Oh, I see.

To Bob Neuwirth.
Are you folk?
BN: Who, am I folk? No, not me. I'm not folk.

To Dylan.
What is your real message?
BD: My real message? Keep a good head and always carry a lightbulb.
Have you tried it?
BD: Well, I plugged it into my socket and the house exploded.

26 April 1965
London Press Conference

Sources: *New Musical Express*, 30 April 1965, page 2
reprinted in *NME Originals: Bob Dylan and the Folk Rock Boom 1964-1974*, p. 14.

DYLAN FETED, BUT REMAINS UNMOVED!

Dylan's here! The world's most talked about folk singer flew into London Airport on Monday for his sell-out tour. And somebody who looks less like a star than he does I've yet to meet.

DYLAN – small, hardly noticed when first he came in, shielding his eyes from photographers' flashlights. Dark glasses go on and off with every flash.

DYLAN – evading more questions than he answers, but more diplomatic than President Johnson's Press Secretary.

DYLAN – above all looking bored and strangely out of place against the luxury that surrounds him. Almost the little boy lost. Until you speak to him.

"I don't give the impression of being a star," he drawls, **"because I don't think of myself as one."**

This isn't the talk of a naive person. He believes it. Like when he says: **"I've seen all these crazes come and go, and I don't think I'm more than a craze. In a couple years time I shall be right back where I started – an unknown."**

A lot of today's stars secretly think this... none of them would dream of saying it! I go along with Dylan and ask him if he'll be sorry when it's over.

"Nope!"

Wouldn't he even miss the money?

"Nope! I spend most of what I get now, anyway – and how I spend it is my business. Not on material things. I don't need ten cars, a mansion and a yacht. Of course, I'd be a fool to say money means nothing to me, but I don't really care."

A battery of cameras fire. Dylan looks as it he's been hit, replaces his dark glasses. **"All I'm really interested in,"** he says, **"is singing to people who want to listen to me. And I don't care how many that is."** Fortunately if not for Dylan, for somebody, thousands of people want to listen.

Born in Duluth, May 24, 1941, Dylan lived for the first 17 years of his life in Hibbing, Minnesota. By the winter of 1961 Dylan, still only 20, had sung his way through one half of the American States.

He later wrote: "*I's driftin' an' learning new lessons. I was making my own depression. I rode freight trains for kicks. An' got beat up for laughs.*"

Finally though, Dylan reached the Columbia Records studios and cut his first album called simply enough '*Bob Dylan*'. That was the start. A lot of authorities state that Dylan's been greatly influenced by that other folk great, Woody Guthrie. I shouldered into the throng to ask about it.

"My eyes and ears have been my great influence," he says. **"Nothing or nobody else really. People who have tried to influence me have been so wrong. I don't know why – they just have been. And the same goes for me. I'm not trying to influence people. In fact I don't want to."**

A voice, well in the background, asks him if he hasn't been influenced by Donovan! His press officer winces!

But Dylan's expression doesn't change. **"Who is this Donovan? I'd never even heard of him until yesterday,"** he says. And he means it.

As more and more people squeezed into the room to welcome Dylan to Britain, he became more and more surprised at this acknowledgement of his popularity. Not that his face displayed much emotion.

"I seem to be more popular here than I am at home," he muses. **"You could call me a Top Ten artist here but in America I'm only Top Forty."**

With chart successes and a sell-out tour Dylan means big business and big money. And it's usually at this stage that the pressure to become intentionally commercial is applied.

But Dylan assured me it won't happen to him. **"The only difference success has brought is that I now feel I must make my records even better. Before I made records to please myself and though I still do that I'm now also conscious that the public deserve the best I can give. This I owe them."**

Even before it starts, Dylan's tour is one of the biggest successes an American artist has had for quite a while, but this apparently leaves him unmoved. But even if he gives the appearance of living in a world of his own, bored with the outside, he can't go wrong. To his fans he represents the rebel, the man who believes in the things they do. And acts the way they'd like to. I must admit that I liked him personally – if only because of his courage in remaining completely detached while being so lionised.

If he appears onstage and decides to stand on his head and not play a note during his entire tour, he'll still be loved. His fans will probably read something into it.

John Wells

26 April 1965
Press Conference, London, England

Sources: *Melody Maker*, 1 May 1965, page 3
reprinted in *NME Originals: Bob Dylan and the Folk Rock Boom 1964-1974*, p. 16.

SCREAMS FOR DYLAN

Bob Dylan got the full star treatment at London Airport on Monday night. A mainly young crowd of about 150 created chaos as the 24-year-old "folk poet" left the customs hall.

Some wore Bob Dylan hats; some showed CND badges; they carried autograph books and copies of his newest hit, '*Subterranean Homesick Blues*'. They carried him – pulling at his hair and tugging at his clothes – into a press conference. He looked a bit white and shaken, but he laughed it off. **"It was OK – they didn't hurt me. They just gave me a haircut. I'm ready to get drunk now!"**

Looking round through a mob of police and TV and radio men, Dylan said: **"I want to make sure my friends got through."** These included Joan Baez, his manager Al Grossman, and publicist Ken Pitt – nursing a bleeding hand after the melée.

Mocking

Earlier, baggage had been sent flying in the airport foyer; a pane of glass smashed; and Lena Horne went by totally unnoticed.

Wearing sunglasses, black jacket, open-necked blue denim shirt, jeans and black leather boots, Dylan was in mocking mood as he faced the journalists' questions.

He parried queries about his friendship with Joan Baez – and asked if he would marry her, Bob said, **"I might marry her arm."**

A few minutes earlier, Joan Baez stood a few feet from him, Dylan was asked if she was over here with him.

"Yes I think she came along," he said.

Then the press asked these questions.

Q: Are The Beatles on the way out?
BD: They will never be on the way out – you know that.
Q: Have you ever heard of Donovan?
BD: Donovan what?
Q: How long will your British concert last?
BD: About an hour and a half.
Q: What numbers will you include?
BD: I don't know yet.
Q: Have you written any songs about Britain since you were last here?
BD: No not about that, I didn't write '*Mrs Brown You Have A Lovely Cheese*' (Smiles).
Q: Have you ever written anything about Vietnam?
BD: No, I don't write about anything.
Q: Did you play amplified guitar on '*Subterranean Homesick Blues*'?
BD: No. I played my own guitar. I just fool around with amplified sometimes.
Q: How much do you think The Beatles contributed to your wide success here?
BD: I find it very hard to understand the meaning of the word success. I don't understand commercial success either. I like The Beatles – I think they are the best. I don't know what they said about me, or anything.
Q: Which pop singers do you like?
BD: I don't really know too many other pop singers. I've just got my own things to do.
Q: Did you write any songs on the plane?

BD: I made a few notes – I call it stabbing the paper.
Q: What is your message?
BD: Keep a good head and always carry a light bulb. (Dylan sat throughout the conference brandishing an outsize electric light bulb. He refused to be drawn on its significance.)

Bob then had a question to put to us.

Where's Christine Keeler?

Someone asked if he wanted to write a song about her. **"No, I just want to meet her,"** said Dylan.

Truth

But why had so many young people made the long journey out to the airport on a miserable wet night, to meet Dylan?

Said Roy Wiffin, aged 20, of Hounslow West: "I think he has great quality in his songs – and I don't think he needs The Beatles as his publicists. He isn't a great singer at all – but he does sing the truth."

Pamela Barron, record shop assistant of Swanley, Kent: "I know all his records but I've never seen him."

What did she think of his '*Subterranean...*' single? "No – a mistake," she said.

Back in the conference room, Dylan was still being prodded about Donovan. **"Where is he, this Donovan?"** said Dylan. **"Let's get him out of here – put him on the wall!"**

And before making a fan-evading sprint to the car taking him to London's Savoy Hotel, Dylan shrugged. **"Oh, to be a simple folk singer again."**

BUT HE DIDN'T LOOK AS IF HE MEANT IT.

Max Jones and Ray Coleman

26 April 1965
Mike Hurst Interview, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 573-574.

In between his Press Conference at London Airport and his second Press Conference at the Savoy Hotel, i.e. within hours of his arrival in the U.K., Dylan provides a telephone interview for Mike Hurst (MH) of BBC's Light Service for the regular Monday night programme Teen Scene. The programme was broadcast that very night. With thanks to Harald Muller for drawing this to my attention.

MH: Well, perhaps it will be third time lucky, but, well, I am trying Bob Dylan again – Bob, can you hear me this time?

BD: Yes.

MH: Oh you can, great. This is Mike Hurst of *Teen Scene* on behalf of everyone here and the people listening, I would like to say welcome to Britain.

BD: Thank you very much.

MH: Well, what have you seen of it so far. About 200 yards of tarmac?

BD: Yes. 300 or 400 yards.

MH: What was the journey like over?

BD: Oh, it was fine, it was fine.

MH: A lot of kids at the airport to meet you?

BD: Yes, there were some.

MH: Just some? Oh, probably I think you are being modest. I think. Are you surprised by your success in this country?

BD: Yes, yes. I was.

MH: Did you think it would ever happen or did you think it would never happen?

BD: I didn't think one way or the other about it.

MH: Would you say, this is a point that has been brought up over here, would you say the Beatles are your biggest unofficial press agents in this country?

BD: Gee, I don't know. I hope so.

MH: They have done an awful lot of good, Bob, over here in the last nine months. Talking an awful lot about you to the trade press and so on. There is one thing I've heard that has often been reported over here, have you ever heard of Donovan?

BD: No. Somebody else just asked me that.

MH: You haven't heard of Donovan?

BD: No.

MH: Well, Donovan is your sort-of counterpart over here. What do you think of someone being your opposite number in this country and doing your style of act? Flattered or not?

BD: I guess so. I just haven't heard of him, though.

MH: He dresses an awful lot like you. Are you still wearing denims?

BD: Me?

MH: Yeah.

BD: No, my clothes are always usually stolen about every two months and I have to get new clothes all the time. Right now I am wearing a shirt and pants and things.

MH: Not a suit?

BD: No.

MH: I wouldn't believe it if Bob Dylan wore a suit. (Laughter) Well, I tell you, a lot of the purists over here – by that, I mean people who like folk music – when they say they like folk music, you know what I mean – a lot of them say it is almost disgusting that a Bob

Dylan record sort of gets into the common or garden pop charts. What do you think of that? I mean, do you think it's disgusting? I don't for a start.

BD: Well, I don't know "disgusting".

MH: Well, I think it's a bit of a snobbish attitude, you know.

BD: Yeah, well, I guess.

(laughter)

MH: Your new record, by the way, I was very surprised when I heard because, to my mind, it is very much like the early rock style, country rock 'n' roll. What do you think? Do you agree or not?

BD: I used to play rock n' roll, you know, a long time ago but, uh, I don't know, this has got rhythm. I mean, it's drums and electric guitars, you know, and it's called rock n' roll. I guess it's rock n' roll.

MH: You are going to hate me for saying this. It sounds like early Presley discs.

BD: I don't think it's rock 'n' roll. I think it is early, authentic folk music myself, you know.

MH: Yes, that is the new point that has often been dragged up over here, you know, as to what your music actually is.

BD: I have no idea what it is. I have absolutely no idea.

MH: It just comes out of your head, just like that.

BD: Yeah. A lot is in my head.

MH: Well, it comes out of your head and goes on to paper very well, because it has succeeded tremendously. Well, people like to think that you are unaffected by success, Bob. Is it true? Do you have a luxury flat like other pop singers, or do you just live quiet?

BD: I don't know too many other pop singers. I don't, I am not really involved in...

MH: Do you like to think you are apart from them or not?

BD: Well, not apart. I guess I have just got my own things to do, you know, and I do them in my own kind of way.

MH: Well, we'll leave you, Bob. Would you just like to send a message to the fans in this country who you are probably going to meet within the next few weeks.

BD: Yeah, I would just like to sing for whoever wants to hear. It's about all I wanna do.

MH: I think it's probably the best ambition a singer can probably have. Well, thank you very much and now we are going to play your latest release now.

BD: *Subterranean* – are you going to play the other side?

MH: Yes, that is great, I heard it this evening. It's really good. But, I'll think we'll stick with *Subterranean* because that is the hit over here. OK?

BD: See you later, now.

MH: See you soon, 'Bye now.

Subterranean Homesick Blues plays

MH: Well, I think you will agree with me that it's pretty great to hear from Bob Dylan and, after that, I certainly got a really good impression of him. He is a very nice person indeed.

27 April 1965
Jack De Manio Interview, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 63-64.

Dylan met with Jack de Manio (DM) of the BBC on the 27th April 1965 and the resulting interview was broadcast the following morning on BBC Radio's Home Service on the Today program. De Manio's no-nonsense attitude almost has Dylan admitting he's been lying his head off over those childhood escapee stories but Dylan recovers and his credibility remains intact... just. Note the angst about wearing ties and consider whether this prompted the 1966 Maura Davis interview.

Taken from the circulating tape.

DM: I can't understand. If you're so anti-establishment, why choose the Savoy Hotel to stay in?

BD: Y'know, I'm not anti-anything... I don't have anything to do with the establishment. If other people want something to do with it, that's fine. First of all, I didn't pick this hotel and it's not going to bring me down just because I'm there, er... to sleep in the streets and find some, y'know, rat hotel. I mean, I could do that too, if I wanted to. I just don't feel like that. It's easier here.

DM: Now, this question... You're also reported in the papers to have said that you'll never wear a tie because you don't own one. Why's that?

BD: What difference does it make if I wear a tie or not? A tie's not going to make me feel any better... No... I'm just not going to wear one. I'm not hung up on not wearing a tie. I just don't take it that deep. Strapping around my neck just doesn't appeal to me. It's fine for other people if they want to do that. I'm certainly not saying all you people who are wearing ties, take them off and the world's going to be a better world. I don't care if somebody wears a tie.

DM: It's also reported that, and I think it's hard to believe, because here you said that you ran away from home when you were 10, 12, 13, 15, 15 ½, 17 and 18. I can't believe that...

BD: Yes, it's true.

DM: It's a load of nonsense.

BD: No. Well, it's true to an extent, y'know. First of all, I wrote this – this is from a thing I wrote which, God knows, I don't even know why it got over here in this country, but this is from a thing I wrote. I wrote this in 1960.

DM: Yes.

BD: It's 1965 now. That's when I wrote it. I wrote it in 1960. In 1960, I was five years younger than now. And, er...

DM: What, you were about 19 or 20?

BD: Yeah, I was 19, I guess. So I wrote this. That's just after I got away, y'know, from...

DM: Why did you write it, because you obviously aren't like that? Because you're really rather a gentle person.

BD: Well, I did do this. This is really true. I mean I did run away at 10, 12,...

DM: Did you?

BD: Well, 8, 10 ½, y'know, this is, this is true. If somebody wants to believe it, that's fine. If somebody doesn't want to believe it, that's OK. I mean, it's not such an important thing. I don't care about it, y'know.

(Two verses of *The Times They Are A-Changin'*)

DM: The times certainly are a-changin'.

27 April 1965
Unidentified source, reported in TWM #1038

Source: *TWM* #1038

I asked the allegedly unconventional Dylan to name the wildest task he had ever performed.

"Well, see, there was this song I was writing once. I put all the words down in their correct order on the paper, then I tore it in four.

"Then I rearranged the quarters to see if I got a better song out of the jumble."

And did he? **"No, I guess the rhyming didn't work out right. But it was pretty wild wondering if I was going to get a great song out of it."**

27 April 1965
John Wells interview for New Musical Express, England

Source: *New Musical Express*, 30 April 1965

BOB DYLAN INTERVIEWED BY JOHN WELLS

"I don't give the impression of being a star," he drawls, **"because I don't think of myself as one."**

This isn't the talk of a naïve person. He believes it. Like when he says: **"I've sat back and seen all these crazes come and go, and I don't think I'm more than a craze. In a couple of years I shall be right back where I started—an unknown."**

A lot of today's stars secretly think this… none of them would dream of saying it! I go along with Dylan and ask him if he'll be sorry when it's over.

"Nope!"

Wouldn't he even miss the money?

"Nope! I spend most of what I get now, anyway—and ho… I spend it is my business. Not on material things. I don't need ten cars, a mansion and a yacht.

"Of course, I'd be a fool to say money means nothing to me, but I don't REALLY care."

A battery of cameras fire. Dylan looks as if he's been hit, replaces his dark glasses. **"All I'm really interested in,"** he says, **"is singing to people who want to listen to me. I don't care how many that is."**

Fortunately, if not for Dylan, for somebody, thousands of people want to listen…

…I shouldered my way back into the throng to ask about Dylan's first record.

"My eyes and ears have been my great influence," he says. **"Nothing or nobody else really."** He shrugged his shoulders. **"People who have tried to influence me have been so wrong. I don't know why—they just have been. They aren't with what I'm trying to do.**

"And the same goes for me. I'm not trying to influence people. In fact I don't want to."

A voice, well in the background, asked him if he hasn't been influenced by Donovan!

His press officer winces! But Dylan's expression doesn't change.

"Who is this Donovan? I'd never even heard of him until yesterday," he says. And he means it.

Hastily I get back to "influence".

"No," he tells me. **"I don't write finger-pointing songs** (his term for message) **because I think I can put the world to rights. I don't think I can and I don't really care if I can or not.**

"I just write what I feel. If other people think it has a message it's up to them, but I'm not deliberately trying to put one across."

As more and more people squeezed into the room at the Savoy to welcome Dylan to Britain, he became more and more surprised at this acknowledgement of his popularity. Not that his face displayed much emotion.

"I seem to be more popular here than I am at home," he muses. **"I reckon you could call me a top ten artist here but in America I'm only top forty."**

Someone asked him if there was a massive welcome from the fans at London Airport when he flew in the day before.

"Don't remember," he says.

Someone prompted him by saying: "Surely you must remember?"

He admits: **"Yeah, there were some people there."**

He's really bored by now. He brightens when I talk about his latest record 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' and tell him it's in the NME charts giving him two side by side in the list.

But he doesn't greet the news with abandoned anthusiasm. It's just: **"Nice to hear that."**

I say I found 'Subterranean' a little different from his usual records. I wonder, in fact, if it had been cut for some time.

"About six months ago," he says. **"I just make them as I feel at the time."**

With chart successes and a sell-out tour Dylan means big business and big money. And it's usually at this stage that the pressure to become internationally commercial is applied. But Dylan assured me it won't happen to him.

"As far as my records are concerned the only difference success has brought is that I now feel I must make my records even better.

"Before I made records to please myself and though I still do this I'm now also conscious that the public deserves the best I can give. This I owe them."

This article was accompanied by a photograph of Bob Dylan saluting with the caption: 'Bob Dylan salutes England? Or is he getting in the mood to write a new Civil War song? Actually he said: **"I was trying to attract a passing bird."**

30 April 1965
Jenny De Yong And Peter Roche Interview, Sheffield, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 301-304.

Dylan gave a concert at Sheffield City Hall on April 30th 1965. After the show he was interviewed by Jenny De Yong and Peter Roche, a couple of reporters from the Sheffield University newspaper *Darts*. Obviously they asked the right questions because Dylan gave them an unusually trouble-free interview compared with others conducted during his 1965 UK Tour. The article was published in the May issue of *Darts*.

The article has been modified to make it more readable but the words have not been changed.

"I try to harmonize with songs the lonesome sparrow sings," sang Bob Dylan, alone on the stage at a packed City Hall last Friday: Dylan is himself sparrow-like – a thin, faded, ruffled sparrow – but one that sings to the tune of £2,000 per concert.

His dark-circled eyes seemed to peer above the conglomeration surrounding him (two microphones, a table with two glasses of much-needed water and a harmonica cradle round his polo-sweatered neck), while his penetrating songs convinced even the most cynical that Bob Dylan is worthy of the mound of superlatives which has been heaped upon him and under which his earlier followers feared he might suffocate.

An essential part of the popular image is the loneliness of Bob Dylan. He sings about it, in haunting symbols. He sings too about bitterness, of "The flesh-coloured Christs that glow in the dark". Make no mistakes though – Dylan can write in glowing images about war and violence but he can write with equal insight, and strictly for laughs, about the things that are reality to a greater part of his audience, like the boy trying to persuade his girl to stay for the night.

Dylan has been set up as everything from a blue-denim god to a guitar-playing Socrates, corrupting youth by opening the door on hooliganism, warning the universal parent: "Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command". It was for this reason that we approached him with some trepidation (and considerable difficulty, owing to positive festoons of red tape). We anticipated meeting the "sullen, bored Mr. Dylan" about whom so much has been written in the Press lately – and found instead an individual who was very tired but very willing to talk. He answered our questions in his room at the Grand Hotel, perched on the edge of a couch, a cup of black coffee in one hand, a cigarette (Player's, untipped) in the other. Around him his entourage: a tough, voluble manager with flowing grey hair; a hip-talking young man with glasses and a lovely jacket; a tall negro with an engaging chin; a dark, chatty girl hitching a plastic iris.

Dylan talks rapidly – his voice very soft – even when discussing topics about which he obviously feels strongly (the Press, for example) his tone remains quiet, matter-of-fact. His thin, pale face has a fragile, almost transparent quality – although this was probably due in part to lack of sleep ("He's had no proper sleep for three days," Joan Baez had told us earlier). Miss Baez, who plans to tour Britain herself some time in the Autumn, sat quietly in a corner of the room, watching Dylan intently as he talked.

To start with the obvious question: what do you think of Donovan and *Catch the Wind*?

BD: Well, I quite like that song, and he sings it quite well. He's very young though, and people might like to try to make him into something that he isn't; that's something he'll have to watch. But the song is O.K.

Isn't the tune a lot like your *Chimes of Freedom*?

BD: Oh, I don't care what he takes from me; I don't care what other singers do to my songs either, they can't hurt me any. Like with the Animals and *Baby Let Me Follow You Down*, I didn't worry none about that. I met the Animals over in New York, and we all went out and got scoused. Is that what you say? (Someone behind him suggests "sloshed".) **Oh yeah, that's it, sloshed. Anyway, the Animals are O.K., I liked their last one, *Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood*, that was a good one.**

Coming on to your latest single, *Subterranean Homesick Blues*, many people seem worried about the electric guitars and drums.

BD: Yeah, well we had a lot of swinging cats on that track, real hip musicians, not just some cats I picked up off the street, and we all got together and we just had a ball. Anyway, that's just one track off the album.

So why release it as a single?

BD: That's not me, that's the Company. The Company says to me "It's time to do your next album", so I go along and record the tracks for the album. What we do with the songs then, we leave it up to them. But I record... I wouldn't record a single.

Aren't you afraid though that they'll turn you into a pop star?

BD: They can't turn me into anything; I just write my songs and that's it. They can't change me any, and they can't change my songs. *Subterranean* sounds a bit different because of the backing, but I've had backing on my songs before, I had some backing on *Corrina*.

What are your own favourite songs?

BD: You mean the ones I've written? Well, it depends on how I'm feeling; I think to be really good a song has to hit you at the right moment. But I like most of the ones on my new album, and on my last album I guess the one I liked best was *I Don't Believe You*.

Your songs have changed a lot over the last couple of years. Are you consciously trying to change your style, or would you say that this was a natural development?

BD: Oh, it's a natural one, I think. The big difference is that the songs I was writing last year, songs like *Ballad in Plain D*, they were what I call one-dimensional songs, but my new songs I'm trying to make more three-dimensional, you know, there's more symbolism, they're written on more than one level.

How long does it take you to write a song? Say a song like *Hard Rain*?

BD: Well, I wrote *Hard Rain* while I was still on the streets, I guess that was the first three-dimension song I wrote. It took me about – oh, about two days.

Is that normal?

BD: No, that was kind of long; usually I write them a lot quicker, sometimes in a couple of hours.

Would you say that your songs contain sufficient poetry to be able to stand by themselves, without music?

BD: If they can't do that, then they're not what I want them to be. Basically, I guess I'm more interested in writing than in performing.

Does that explain all those poems on the backs of your albums?

BD: Oh, those (laughing) – **well they were kind of written out of terror, I used to get scared that I wouldn't be around much longer, so I'd write my poems down on anything I**

could find – the backs of my albums, the backs of Joan's albums, you know, anywhere I could find.

Why do you suppose that the national press tries to make you out to be angry and bored and all the rest?

BD: That's because they ask the wrong questions, like, 'What did you have for breakfast', 'What's your favourite colour', stuff like that. Newspaper reporters, man, they're just hung-up writers, frustrated novelists, they don't hurt me none by putting fancy labels on me. They got all these preconceived ideas about me, so I just play up to them.

How do you feel about being labelled as the voice of your generation?

BD: Well, I don't know. I mean, I'm 24, how can I speak for people of 17 or 18, I can't be anyone else's voice. If they can associate with me that's O.K., but I can't give a voice to people who have no voice. Would you say that I was your voice?

Well you manage to say a lot of things that I'd like to say, only I don't have the words.

BD: Yeah, but that's not the same as being your voice.

No, but it's something.

Someone mentions food and at once Dylan and followers remember that they haven't eaten for hours. Not much is said but it becomes increasingly obvious that food has the edge on aesthetics... We took that as our cue to leave.

May 1965
Dylan's *Blind Date*, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 307-308.

Whilst at the Savoy Hotel, Dylan is persuaded to review the latest single releases for the *Melody Maker, Blind Date* column (published 8th May 1965)

THAT'S TOM JONES! I'D BUY IT – IF I BOUGHT RECORDS

Sandie Shaw: *Long Live Love* (Pye)
English – to take a guess. Is it Millie? I like the backing. I know who it is – it's Dusty Springfield. No, I give up. I like that singing. I don't care about the song though.

Tom Jones: *Little Lonely One* (Columbia)
That's Tom Jones! I like that record – I like him. Hit? Do you mean will it sell a lot of records? Oh yeah. I don't know where it will sell a lot of records, but it will do. I'd buy it – if I bought records.

Larry Williams: *Sweet Little Baby* (Decca)
Is that called *My Little Baby*? I don't know who's singing it. Is it the Searchers? It's NOT Manfred Mann, and it's NOT The Beatles. I don't like saxophones – I just like Ornette Coleman who plays it. No, I don't like this a lot.

Joe Turner: *Midnight Cannonball* (Atlantic)
Yeh – I like that, but it could be a million people. Yeh – I like the words too.

Carolyn Hester: *Ain't That Rain* (Dot)
Pretty good if you're catching a ship someplace. I like the way she sings though – I like her voice. I like the record actually. I'd take that ship.

Freewheelers: *Why Do You Treat Me Like A Fool* (HMV). (Song written by Donovan).
Oh – that's so good. Oh I like that. I've had no sleep for three nights, but I do like that record and that sound. I see songs in pictures, and I like the picture of that. I can imagine someone better singing it, though, but the song's a real song. I like it.

Ikettes: *Peaches And Cream* (Stateside)
This must be called *Peaches And Cream*. This is all right. That's the Ikettes, right? Very stuffy harmonica, yeh. The night that harmonica man was playing, he had a cold. It's good.

Bachelors: *Marie* (Decca)
I thought this was a song about Murray the K. I wouldn't have liked the record. No, I don't like this record at all. I wouldn't have any great objection to it, if it was playing somewhere. But I certainly don't like it.

Carolyn Carter: *It Hurts* (London)
Mary Wells? It's not Brenda Lee and it's not Ann-Margret. I think she's from Chicago – she's got that accent. Well, either from Chicago, Detroit or Liverpool. I did that. I don't think she'd go out with someone who wore glasses, though.

Otis Redding: *Mr. Pitiful* (Atlantic)

This is a good record when you're driving through the Hudson Tunnel. Will it sell a lot? Well, it will reach number one if everyone drives through the Hudson Tunnel. Oh – I like the ending – it's fantastic. I think this one ends differently from the one in the States. That was better. I like this record, yeh.

Four Tops: *Ask The Lonely* (Tamla Motown)
I like that record. I've heard it before – can't remember where. It was on the radio. I don't know who it is, but I like it. I like all the climaxes, y'know?

Mia Lewis: *Wish I Didn't Love Him* (Decca)
I think she's singing in a pool of water. And she's got a thermometer in her ear. Soon, she'll get a bout of pneumonia, if she's not careful, and they'll have to put her out of the record business! I like her, though. I don't go for those kinda songs, with lines like that. It might get better as it goes on. No, I didn't hate it.

May 1965
New Musical Express Compilation, UK Tour

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 789-791.

QUESTION-TIME WITH BOB DYLAN
Compiled by Derek Johnson

As mentioned later, a composite of questions raised and answers given during Bob's tour of the UK in May 1965. Some of these were used to produce this article by Johnson which appeared in the *New Musical Express* of October 15th 1965.

A profound and deep-thinking young man, sincerely believing in the philosophy and the protests he utters, unlike some self-styled folk singers, who are merely in the game for its commercial value. A complex and, at times, controversial character, who originated and leads one of the most powerful cults of the days – and in consequence has earned himself a permanent niche in the annals of pop music. That's Bob Dylan, a man with plenty to say and has a unique way of saying it.

Although many of his beliefs and messages are contained in song, Dylan can be equally verbose in conversation. He talks freely and it is a rarity for him to give the same answer to a stock question.
During his recent British tour, he was bombarded with hundreds of questions (QQ) and we have selected a few of his answers which we feel are of particular interest.

They are a composite of what he told the NME and the replies he gave to Sheffield University reporters Jenny De Yong and Peter Roche for their student's paper "*Darts*".

QQ: You must have been questioned many times about your attitude to Donovan. What, in fact, do you think of him?
BD: I specially liked his record of *Catch The Wind*. It was a good song and he sang it well. But he's still very young and people might try to make him into something that he isn't. He'll have to watch that!

QQ: Would you agree that *Catch The Wind* was a bit like your own composition *Chimes Of Freedom*?
BD: Oh, I don't care what he takes from me! Frankly, I don't care what other singers do to my songs, either. They can't hurt me any. Like with the Animals. "*Baby, Let Me Follow You Down*". I didn't worry about that. I met the Animals in New York and we all went out and had a ball together. Yep, the Animals are OK in my book. I liked their "*Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood*".

QQ: How do you choose which of your titles will be released as singles?
BD: I don't. That's up to the record company. They say to me, "It's time to do your next album", so I go along and record enough tracks for the LP. What they do with the songs then – well, that's their decisions. But I record albums. I wouldn't and couldn't record a single.

QQ: Do you think there's a move afoot to turn you into a pop star?
BD: They can't turn me into anything. I just write my songs and that's that! Nobody can change me and by the same token, they can't change my songs. Of course I vary things

once in a while, like with the different backing I had on *Subterranean Homesick Blues*. But that was entirely my own doing. Nobody talked me into it. Just so happened we had a lot of swinging cats on that track, real hip musicians.

QQ: What are your own favorite songs?
BD: You mean of the ones I've written? It depends on how I'm feeling. To be a really good song I think it has to be good at the right moment. But one of my own favorite songs is *I Don't Believe You*.

QQ: Would you say that your style is changing?
BD: Certainly my work as a writer has changed over the last couple of years. The big difference is that the songs I was writing last year were what I call one-dimensional songs. But I'm trying to make my new songs more three-dimensional. There's more symbolism and they're written on more than one level. And I guess that's affected my work as an artist, too...

QQ: How long does it take you to write a song?
BD: Sometimes a couple of days. Sometimes a couple of hours. Depends on my mood.

QQ: Would you say that your songs contain sufficient poetry to be able to stand by themselves, without music?
BD: If they can't do that then they're not what I want them to be. Basically, I guess I'm more interested in writing than in performing.

QQ: How about those poems on the back of your albums?
BD: Well, they were written out of a kind of terror! I used to get scared I wouldn't be around much longer, so I'd write my poems down on anything I could find – and that included my albums!

QQ: Why do you think the national press tries to label you as angry, bored and disinterested?
BD: That's because they ask the wrong questions, like "What's your favorite color?" and "What did you have for breakfast?"... stuff like that. So who cares? Newspaper reporters are just hung-up writers, frustrated novelists. They don't hurt me by putting fancy labels on me. They've got all these pre-conceived ideas about me, and I just play up to them.

QQ: How do you feel about being called the voice of your generation?
BD: I don't know really. I mean, I'm 24. How can I speak for someone who's 17? I can't be anyone else's voice. If they care to identify themselves with me, that's okay – but I can't give a voice to people who have no voice, can I?

QQ: Do you think there are too many protest songs around just now?
BD: Yes, Half of them don't understand what they're trying to say. I'm all for protest songs if they're sincere. But how many of them are?

May 1965
New Musical Express Survey, London England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1021–1022.

During Dylan's stay in England in May '66, he was asked by *NME* to complete a questionnaire. This was a standard proforma used to 'interview' many artists. As the Editor states, most replies were much more straightforward, but who would expect a clear and unequivocal response from Bob?

From *New Musical Express*, May 21, 1965.

WHEN A POET FILLS IN A FORM YOU CAN EXPECT ANYTHING!

It was probably idiotic of us to ask a poet like Bob Dylan to contribute to our Life-Lines feature. You can't expect an idyllic dreamer to do it – as you or I might do it.

However, back came the form with two of the four pages of questions answered, five of which are on the left (*at the extreme bottom, in this case*) and others printed below:

First important public appearance: **Closet at O'Henry's Squire Shop.**

Other discs in best-sellers: **I Lost My Love In San Francisco, But She Appeared Again In Honduras And We Took A Trip To Hong Kong And Stayed Awhile in Reno But I Lost Her Again In Oklahoma.**

Current Hit: **None I know of.**

Latest Release: **The Queens Are Coming.**

Albums: **Yes**

EPs: **None**

Favourite food: **Turkish Mervin** (a form of egg plant coming from Nebraska)

Favourite drink: **Frozen tabbacco**.

Favourite bands/instrumentalists: **Corky the Kid** (Sombreros).

Favourite composers: **Brown Bumpkin and Sidney Ciggy**.

Favourite groups: **The Fab Clocks**.

Miscellaneous likes: **Trucks with no wheels, French telephones, anything with a stewed prune in the middle.**

Miscellaneous dislikes: **Hairy firemen, toe-nails, glass Mober forks, birds with ears**.

Best friend: **Porky the Wild Elephant Shooter**.

Most thrilling experience: **Getting my birthday cake stomped on by Norman Mailer**.

Tastes in music: **Sort of peanut butter**.

Pets: **My friend Lampa**.

Personal ambition: **To be a waitress**.

Professional ambition: **To be a stewardess**.

Present disc label: **See the Dog**.

Other labels in past: **Many dogs**.

Recording manager: **Lost dog**.

Personal manager: **Dog Jones**.

Musical director: **Big Dog**.

6 May 1965
Eldon's Gossip Column, Newcastle Upon Tyne, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 305-306.

A reporter from the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* interviews Dylan for the gossip column on the afternoon of the Newcastle City Hall concert. To quote Heylin (*Stolen Moments*) – "Clearly wholly sick of the obvious and pointless questions which he is being repeatedly subjected to, Dylan interviews with the English National Press have become a stream of verbal put-ons. Interviewed in the afternoon by a reporter from the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, he at one point retorts, **"why should you want to know about me, I don't want to know about you"**."

A TALK WITH MR. DYLAN WAS SO BAFFLING AND BEWILDERING.

His name is Bob Dylan. He's 24. The king of the folk-song world – crowned with a mop of hair like a badly-trimmed hedge.

Apart from that I can tell you little. Except that my interview with him will go down as the toughest 20 minutes in my working life.

I left the City Hotel where he was staying on his one-night stand in Newcastle feeling baffled and brainwashed.

Intellectual surrealism or way-out gibberish – I'm still not sure which Mr. Dylan treated me to.

Fairly innocuous start, I thought; I asked him about his education. No answer. **"It's so far in the past that I have no motive for recalling it. It does not mean anything to me,"** he said.

It didn't mean much to me either. But drawing on some slight knowledge of the star, I asked him why he had run away from home seven times.

NO DIFFERENT

A shrug of the shoulders. Silence. Then: **"Where I come from everyone runs away from home. I'm no different from anyone else in that respect."**

I wiped my brow. Took a look at the six people with whom he had been sitting as I came into the room. "How many people are travelling with you," I asked, tamely. **"Just one,"** he said.

It was about this time that the tic in my eyelid began working overtime.

His companion's name, it transpired, was Taco Pronto. I queried the name. Dylan: **"This is what we call him. It's his name."**

What do you feel about your burst to fame, I asked a slightly hysterical note beginning to creep into my voice.

"I don't know. I don't read many English newspapers".

For the next few minutes we argued about whether or not people should want to know about him.

"Why should you want to know about me I don't want to know about you," he said.

A BOOK

He is writing a book which, he says, people can read if they want to learn about him. Alternatively, they can attend his concerts: **"That is me – I am presenting myself when I sing."**

Is the book an autobiography? Grin. **"I am only 24, what is there to write about? No, it's a book of confusion, tiny little sayings. It's like a splash on the wall."**

My ace card now – Donovan. But Mr. Dylan beat me to it by suggesting we take his picture holding a magazine featuring on Donovan.

"A nice guy. He came to see me in my hotel. I have heard him sing. Sure he sings like me. Just coincidence."

Some character. Some interview. Personally, after that gruelling experience I felt like... well, a splash on the wall.

6 May 1965
Terry Ellis Interview, Newcastle Upon Tyne, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 309-314

In the dressing room of Newcastle Upon Tyne City Hall, science student and Newcastle University Social Secretary, Terry Ellis (TE) takes his turn at pot-lock with Dylan's put-on approach and ends up very much the worst for wear. This interview was filmed for and partially broadcast in *Dont Look Back*. Terry Ellis's article for the Newcastle Student Newspaper *The Courier* is presented below and, as it hardly seems to reflect the real events, you'll find the *Dont Look Back* session transcribed beneath it.
AP = Alan Price.

Dylan Talks

"I've never been insincere in my whole life." So spake the bard, or at least the modern equivalent, the folksinger.

And when I say folksinger, I mean just that. This genius appeared at the City Hall last Thursday, the man who is said by his fans to "have the message"; the man who claims, paradoxically, **"I have never tried to communicate to people. There isn't any point, it is impossible to make anyone understand what I think."**

I had a long conversation with Dylan, during which I was never sure who was doing the interviewing, me, Dylan or Alan Price of the Animals.

Communication.

TE: OK., it's impossible for most people to understand but some may, and you must communicate to find out which they are.
BD: Do you think we have an adequate means of communication?
TE: No, but it's the best we have and we must use it.
BD: What would we do if we couldn't communicate?
TE: Oh, I'm sure... who's doing the interview, me or you?
AP: Well, you haven't asked any questions yet.

And so it went on, all three interviewing each other, till Dylan at last came out with something telling, **"I have my friends, I know who they are, I don't need any more. I don't see what you have to gain spiritually from talking to someone for a few minutes."**

Insight.

Well, I didn't talk for just a few minutes, but rather for over half an hour. I didn't gain spiritually, but I think I caught an insight into the man who wrote

"How many times must the cannon balls fly, before too many people have died?
The answer my friend is blowin' in the wind, the answer is blowin' in the wind."

And now for reality – a transcript of that part of the interview that appears in *Dont Look Back*.

BD: Do you think it would bother me one little bit if you disliked me?
TE: No, no. But with some people it might bother you.

BD: No, no, you know. I've got my friends. I mean, you know, I'm well situated.
TE: But what about before you had any friends, did you... were you worried then?
BD: Was I worried?... I wasn't worried about it. No, I was lucky. Weren't you?
TE: (Comments obscured by Dylan's guitar strumming)
BD: Weren't you lucky when you didn't have any friends?
TE: I can't remember having any friends.
BD: No? Do you have many friends now?
TE: No. Because, because, I reached a stage when I suddenly realized what a friend was and then I probably had one or two. Before that I didn't understand what a friend was anyway.
BD: Did you talk to your friends?
TE: I didn't know who they were then.
BD: Well, now who your friends are... do you talk to your friends?
TE: Yeah. There are one or two people who I believe I can talk to.
BD: That's why they're your friends, because you can talk to them?
TE: I think a friend is a friend because...
BD: Do you communicate with them?
TE: Ah, to a certain extent. They can understand me more than anybody else.
BD: Ah, well, you see, we're different. We come from two different worlds. You come from England, I come from the United States.
TE: Yeah, it's true, but, I mean, we're still human beings, so there's some sort of connection between us.
BD: No. I'm just a guitar player, that's all.
TE: Man, you're trying to knock me.
BD: Man, believe me, I'm not trying to do that.
TE: I mean, what, I mean, if somebody comes in to interview you, normally, what's your attitude?
BD: Oh, you've just read those interviews that we, a couple, the first few days that I was here.
TE: Erm, yeah, yeah.
BD: Those weren't right, you know, you know that, you know. You know that they were all lies, lies, rubbish, you know that.
TE: Well... I don't know. I got through the first few lines and didn't read much more. Why I came in here I don't know. I'm being regaled by all this...
BD: Are you going to the concert?
TE: Yeah. I'm going to watch. I'm going to watch. I mean, I... well, this is what I came to see mostly.
BD: Well, just listen.
TE: Came to see you, but I thought I'd like to have a word with you first. I mean what is your whole attitude to life and when you meet someone what is your attitude towards them?
BD: I don't like them.
TE: You don't like them?
BD: No!
TE: I mean, I come in here, what's your attitude towards me?
BD: Oh, I've got no attitude towards you at all. Why should I have an attitude towards you? I don't even know you.
TE: No, but, I mean, it would be an attitude if you wanted to know me or didn't want to know me.
BD: Why should I want to know you?
TE: I don't know. That's why I'm asking.
BD: Well, I don't know.
TE: Eh!
BD: Ask me another question. You give me a reason why I should want to know you.

TE: Erm. I might be worth knowing.
BD: Why?
TE: Eh!
BD: Why? Tell me why? What good is it going to be for me to know you? Name me one thing I'm going to gain.
TE: Well, you might learn something from my attitude to life.
BD: Well, what is your attitude to life?
TE: I can't explain that in two minutes.
BD: Well, what are you asking me to explain in two minutes? 'Cause that's all your getting is two minutes. You're asking me too explain something in two minutes too.
TE: You're the artist. You're supposed to be able to explain in two minutes.
BD: I am?
TE: Yeah!
BD: Hey, wow. What about you? Aren't you an artist?
TE: Oh no.
BD: What are you?
TE: I'm a science student.
BD: Well, let's hear it again, what are you? A science student?
TE: A science student, of mathematics.
BD: Now what does that mean? Just what does that mean?
TE: Erm?
BD: What does that mean? What do you do? What's your purpose in the world?
TE: Erm. What's my purpose?
BD: Yeah.
TE: What's my purpose?
BD: How do you help? You, know. What do you do in the world?
TE: I'm a, er... I'm in the world for me I guess. A bit like everybody else.
BD: Just like me.
TE: Yeah. Yeah.
BD: So we're just alike. Aren't we?
TE: I guess so.
BD: We don't come from two different worlds. We both come from, er... Prussia.
TE: You were wrong, you were wrong. I was right, all the time. Now, but, this is interesting. Now I go, I go to interview some groups... if I go to interview Alan's mob, I don't think they're... they couldn't care less about me, you know?
BD: Uh, you know why, don'tcha, you know, can't you ever stop to wonder why?
TE: Um!
(Laughter from Price)
BD: There's gotta be some reason, doesn't there?
TE: Yeah, yeah, but it's nothing to do with me because they don't want to know me before I go in.
BD: Uh, well what do you want from them? Why do you want them? Can you write them up in a paper? That's something...
TE: No, I don't think of myself as a... necessarily as a journalist... I'm a person, you know.
BD: ...As a scientist. Well, so what, there's a million, thousand billion, so many persons outside.
TE: Yeah, I agree. Absolutely.
BD: Well, you can't know them all can you?
TE: No, no, but if I meet somebody and I speak with them for a few minutes, I think that guy might be able to give me something.
BD: Well that... oh, ho... wooooah! (laughter all round) **Now we're getting down to it, huh, yeah. What is it that you want?**

TE: Um, everyone wants... everyone is out for what they can get. Well, I might be able to get something material...

BD: You wanna get a chick... might be able to get a chick. Maybe it'll come better. (laughter all round)

(Ellis is offered a harmonica)

BD: You've got it.

TE: I don't want it. I can't play the thing.

BD: We don't want it either.

TE: I can't play it. You know what I meant when I said give me something material, but I'm not necessarily interested.

BD: Well, what can I give you spiritually?

TE: I might learn something.

BD: What?

TE: Uh?

BD: What don't you know?

AP: You get a kick out of interviewing people?

TE: Well, I don't know if I don't try... to find out, will I?

BD: Do you ever just be quiet, silent, just watch and you don't say one word?

TE: Yeah, the whole thing that gets me about... about you and about Alan is the fact that you're knocking from the minute I come in.

BD: Knocking?

TE: Yeah!

BD: I don't think you know when you're liked, that's all. If we, you know, if we want to knock you we can put you on.

TE: Yeah, but I mean, but, he's just said that I'm talking a load of rubbish (referring to something inaudible in the background), you know, and...

AP: I never said that, you're misquoting me already: you see that's another journalist...

TE: Oh no, I didn't misquote you, I interpreted you.

BD: You interpreted him to your own thing, right? To your own rules of your own, your own images.

TE: You have to give some answer.

BD: Why?

AP: Why?

TE: Well, to satisfy you.

BD: You don't have to satisfy me, besides, that's impossible.

TE: Well, if you'd said you didn't want an answer I wouldn't have given one.

BD: You don't try to satisfy everybody.

TE: No.

BD: Do you ever once in a while? Do you ever once in a while try to satisfy somebody?

TE: Somebody, yeah, but not everybody.

BD: A few people.

TE: Some people I can't satisfy, because that's the way I'm made. No matter how hard I tried I couldn't satisfy them.

BD: Well, how do you know that?

TE: Hmm.

BD: How do you know that?

TE: Erm, I can, well, if you get to know somebody for a little while you can guess, just, erm.

BD: Are you still friends with them even though you can't satisfy them?

TE: Yeah. Friends, not deep friends. You find a field in which you can communicate.

BD: What's a deep friend and what's not?

TE: Someone that you're almost exactly on the same plane with them... you can communicate with them very well.

BD: Somebody that's just like you... looks like you...?

TE: No!
BD: No?
TE: No!
BD: Talks like you?
TE: Erm.
BD: Well, how do you like somebody...?
TE: Thinks the same way.
BD: Thinks the same way?
TE: Thinks the same way.
BD: Like what? Like they both think that... both are happy about a green door?
TE: No. Thinking the same language.
BD: Thinking the same language?
TE: Yeah!
BD: Uh, huh.
TE: And so you can understand each other and you know what each other...
BD: Well, let's try to understand each other, shall we?
TE: That wouldn't be a bad idea. That wouldn't be a bad idea and how are we going to set about understanding...?
BD: Well, you can ask your first question.
TE: Erm?
BD: You can ask your first question. Oh yeah. Have you got a question to ask? Come on. You haven't got a question?

Knock on door

BD: I think somebody's calling for you.

Interview interrupted by arrival of the Sheriff's lady.

8 May 1965
Melody Maker interview, London, England

Dylan on Donovan and *Catch The Wind*

On Donovan—**"He played some songs to me… I like him. He's a nice guy."**

Backstage, after singing *Talkin' World War III Blues* in which he referred to Donovan, Dylan said,

"I didn't mean to put the guy down in my songs. I just did it for a joke, that's all."

"Let's hear it." *Catch The Wind* is played. **"I think it's recorded too good—that's one thing. He does sound a bit like he's holding onto a tree trunk, wearing a patch over one eye.**

"But it's a great record. I didn't care for the de-de-de-de parts. But I did like the way he said the word "Uncertainty". You know there's this guy in the States who sounds exactly like him. He's got an imitator, I'm telling you."

"This guy doesn't play guitar like me—he plays cowboy style guitar.

"The song's a real song. It's a very pointed, very gentle record."

After hearing it again, he nodded and said, **"The other side."** After hearing *Why Do You Treat Me Like You Do*—

"I liked the other side better. That guy plays like he's heard of Jack Elliot—he doesn't play guitar like me.

"Where is he? Can I meet him? Does he live in a railway station?"

Donovan later visited Bob at his hotel. **"He played some songs to me,"** Bob said later.

9 May 1965
Horace Judson Interview, London, England

Source: *Bob Dylan Dont Look Back* by D.A. Pennebaker, Ballantine Books, Inc., 1968, pp. 122-131.
The Fiddler Now Upspoke, pp. 579-582.

An "interview" conducted (if that's the right word) by Horace Judson (HJ), referred to elsewhere as Judson Manning the London correspondent for *Time* magazine, in a deserted restaurant area at the Royal Albert Hall, London. Dylan gives Judson a very hard ride – he is still very hurt by previously unfavorable articles by *Time*.

An amazing demonstration of Dylan's power. To quote Anthea Joseph re Judson:

> **"The man was such a prat. And Bob was being absolutely appalling, but so brilliant. By this time I'd learnt that he could pull strips of skin off people, verbally... [Judson] was quite abusive as well. He was extremely upset, he really was; and in a way I suppose it was not really his fault, not properly briefed, treating Bob as some sort of curiosity, not as a serious artist. "**

But Judson was not some young novice. He was a highly experienced newsman who'd been the *Times* UK correspondent throughout the second World War, who was renowned as a fearless interviewer and who had interviewed many famous people including Adolf Hitler.

There's the odd interjection from Bob Neuwirth (BN).
This interview can be seen on *Dont Look Back*.

BD: Are you going to see the concert tonight?
HJ: Yes.
BD: Are you going to hear it?
HJ: Yes.
BD: Okay, you hear and see it and it's going to happen fast. Now, you're not going to get it all, and you might hear the wrong words, and then afterwards, see I can't... I won't be able to talk to you afterwards. I got nothing to say about these things I write, I mean, I just write them. I got nothing to say anything about them, I don't write 'em for any reason. There's no great message. I mean, if, you know, if you wanna tell other people that, you know, go ahead and tell them but I'm not going to have to answer to it. And, they're just going to think, you know, what's this *Time Magazine* telling us? But that, you couldn't care less about that either. You don't know the people that read you.
HJ: Ah...
BD: 'Cause you know, I've never been in *Time Magazine* and yet this hall's filled twice, you know, and I've never been in *Time Magazine*. I don't need *Time Magazine*... and I don't think I'm a folk singer. You'll probably call me a folk singer but, you know, the other people know better 'cause the people, you know, that buy my records, listen to me, don't necessarily read *Time Magazine*. You know, the audience that subscribe to *Time Magazine*? The audience of the people that want to know what's happening in the world week by week. The people that work during the day and can read it small, right? And it's concise, and there's pictures in it.
I mean, those kind of, you know, those... a certain class of people. It's a class of people that take the magazine seriously. I mean, sure I could read it, you know, I read it. I read it on the airplanes but I don't take it seriously. If I want to find out anything I'm not going to read *Time Magazine*. I'm not gonna read *Newsweek*. I'm not gonna read any of

these magazines, I mean, 'cause they just got too much to lose by printing the truth, you know that.

HJ: What kind of truths do they leave out?

BD: On anything! Even on a world-wide basis. They'd just go off the stands in a day if they printed really the truth.

HJ: What is really the truth?

BD: Really the truth is just a plain picture.

HJ: Of what? Particularly

BD: Of, you know, a plain picture of, let's say, a tramp vomiting, man, into the sewer You know, and next door to the picture, you know, Mr Rockefeller, you know, or Mr C.W. Jones, you know, on the subway going to work, you know, any kind of picture. Just make some sort of collage of pictures which they don't do. They don't do. There's no ideas in Time Magazine, there's just these facts. Well, you know, which too are switched because even the article which you are doing, the way it's gonna come out, don't you see, it can't be a good article. Because, the guy that's writing the article is sitting in a desk in New York, he's not, he is not even going out of his office. He's just going to get, all these, ah, 15, you know, reporters and they're gonna send him a quota you know

HJ: That's not me...

BD: No, he's going to put himself on, he's going to put all his readers on, and you know, in another week we have some space in the magazine. But that's all, it means nothing to anybody else. I'm not putting that down because people have gotta eat and live, you know, but let's at least be honest about it. You know, I mean sure, let's say, let's say...

HJ: I just don't, I don't know that you are giving me...

BD: I know more about what you do and you don't even have to ask me how or why or anything, just by looking, you know, than you'll ever know about me, ever. I mean, I could tell you, I could tell you I'm not a folk singer and explain to you why, but you wouldn't really understand. All you could do, you could nod your head, you would nod your head.

HJ: You could be willing to try, and...

BD: No, I couldn't even be willing to try because, it is, you know, it would be, it's, you know, there're certain things which... every word, every word has its little letter and big letter.

HJ: Your friend had the right word – pigeonhole.

BN: No, no, it's not important...

BD: No, it's not pigeonhole, it's not the word at all. You know, every word has its little letter and big letter, like the word "know."

HJ: Yeah.

BD: You know, the word know, "k-n-o-w?"

HJ: Yeah.

BD: Okay, then you know the word know, capital "K-N-O-W"?

HJ: Yeah.

BD: Like, each of us really "knows" nothing.

HJ: Yeah.

BD: Right? but we all think we know things.

HJ: Right.

BD: And, we really know nothing.

HJ: But you're saying you know more about what I do...

BD: No, I'm saying, I'm saying, I'm saying...

BN: No, no, no.

BD: I'm saying that you're going to die, and you're gonna go off the earth, you're gonna be dead. Man, it could be, you know, twenty years, it could be tomorrow, any time, so am I. I mean, we're just gonna be gone. The world's going to go on without us.

HJ: Right.
BD: All right now, you do your job in the face of that and how seriously you take yourself, you decide for yourself.
HJ: Right.
BD: Okay, now I'll decide for myself. Now, you're not going to make me feel unhappy by anything you print about me or anything, you know, or anything like that. It's just, it couldn't, you know, you couldn't offend me. And, I'm sure you know I couldn't offend you. And so all I can hope for you to do is, uh, all your ideas in your own head, somehow, wherever they are...
HJ: Do you care about what you sing?
BD: How could I answer that if you've got the nerve to ask me?
HJ: Well then you, how could you...
BD: I mean, you've got a lot a lot of nerve asking me a question like that.
HJ: I have to ask that.
BD: Do you ask The Beatles that?
HJ: I have to ask you that because you have the nerve to question whether I can.
BD: I'm not questioning you because I don't expect any answer from you. Do you think somebody wouldn't go see somebody if they didn't want entertainment?
HJ: Of course not.
BD: Who, now who wants to go get whipped, you know, and if you do wanna go get whipped, hey, aren't you really being entertained?
HJ: All right... So fine.
BD: Right.
HJ: It's all right.
BD: Okay. So, if you think anybody that comes to see me is coming for any other reason except entertainment, really.
HJ: They'll tell you they're all coming for different reasons.
BD: Well, who cares what they tell you. Who cares what anybody tells you.
HJ: Well, they think they, they think they know why they're doing it.
BD: Well, do you know why they're doing it?
HJ: I know some of the things they say...
BD: People say all kinds of things...
HJ: Uh hummm.
BD: And you have to sort of... to weed it out. Can you weed it out?
HJ: Well, that's what I'm trying to do.
BD: Yeah, well, you see, you have to learn but I can't teach you how to weed it out.
HJ: Yeah, I didn't say that I couldn't do that, I said I don't mean that.
BD: Yeah, well you know, I have no idea. First of all, I'm not even a pop singer.
HJ: You think you have a big audience?
BD: I don't know. I have no idea.
HJ: Well, you appeal to your audiences in some sense as a pop singer. Well, you know, even if it's Caruso he's, uh, you know, appealing to a popular, you know, this is a...
BD: But, he's a pop singer... and I'm just as good a singer as Caruso... Have you heard me sing? Have you ever heard me sing?
HJ: I like Caruso better.
BD: Ohhh... well, you see right there now, right there we have a little disagreement. I happen to be just as good as him... (laughter) **a good singer, have to listen closely...** (laughter) **but I hit all those notes and I can hold my breath three times as long if I want to.**

12 May 1965
Ray Coleman Interview, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 983-989.

This, the longest interview of the tour, between Ray Coleman and Dylan appeared in the *Melody Maker* of May 22nd 1965.

DYLAN IN DEPTH
By Ray Coleman

Bob Dylan talks like an abstract painting. He says he sees his songs in pictures – **"It's kinda hard to explain them away in just a few words."**

"It's hard for me to accept the silent audiences. Ah, they're quiet in the United States too. I've been doing concerts over there for two and a half years. But I don't know why – I feel somewhat bored by the audiences there."

"Silent audiences don't exactly worry me, but I think a lot more about what I'm singing and saying when they're so quiet you know, I was thrown into this situation. In the States there are different levels you work on. I work concerts and also coffee-houses and bars. People talk when you're singing. It's kinda different."

Had Dylan been nervous on British stages?

"Not nervous. Thoughtful. If I appeared nervous or tense, that was because I was kinda inhibited, y'know – standing there listening to everything I was doing. And I don't like to do that much."

"It's different what you hear on stage and what the audience hears. And – well, I was very glad they clapped! I'd like to thank them all individually."

How did Dylan feel about the 'cult' charges? He sat in his room and lit a cigarette. He wore an orange and white shirt and blue jeans. He was barefoot. He gazed at the floor.

"The image – there's nothing to it. If someone wants to believe something about me they can. It doesn't matter a little bit to me."

"At one time it did. That was some years ago when I was on the streets and trying to make some impression. Right now I don't care what people think – the cult is something OTHER people talk about, not me."

"Everybody is motivated to act in a certain way. I don't try to prove anything about myself. I just don't ask people to study me. I don't know what my image is now. I could change my clothes and look different couldn't I?"

"It's all a question of pictures. People may have had a picture of me when I used to wear that hat. I don't work for an image though. I wore that hat when I came to New York City four or five years ago. I'd come from the mid-west where things are not the same."

"People don't grow up the same way, y' know. I find that here in England they are more ready, the young people. They don't have so much as they do have in the United States, where they take things for granted. I mean materially."

"I'm not saying which is better or worse."

"But there's one thing that I can say about the United States that wouldn't happen in this country, England. Over there you could get killed for having long hair, if you're from the wrong part of the country. Or if there's something you said people don't like. You could actually get killed for saying something out of place."

Dylan was clearly now in a more expansive mood.

"Also a lot of people who are teaching other people in the United States – they're teaching, but they don't want people to know more than they know, really."

"I've even heard of people being prevented from going to a place to learn more than other people do."

"It's a form of jealousy, but more serious."

"Now your Liverpool – it looks like the whole of New York's West Side, or Greenwich Village. But somehow I got the feeling that here, I wasn't playing to that sort of people. Well, I think England's more open-minded, y'know."

The usually withdrawn Dylan – he'll be twenty four on May 24th – was thinking hard by now. His forehead was creased in thought.

"So a lot of people like me because it's the thing to do, right. I don't believe that. I don't think my British audiences were phoneys. Anyone who actually went to the concert will know that."

"I can't see a phoney audience being forced to accept a song like *Gates Of Eden*. I don't believe THAT song could be accepted as a 'thing to do'."

"And if they can TAKE a song like that, there's hope for them, whatever sort of people they are, right?"

Right. Bob was equally as strong on the subject of his hit parade successes.

"If they attack me because I have some success with records, then they're entitled to. But I'm equally entitled to disagree with them."

"Popular music – a lot of it – is fantastically great music. Are those people trying to hate pop music, or what? I don't hate pop music."

"Oh man, somebody's got to be a little bit whacky to say: 'I don't like electric guitar'. What's wrong with electrified guitar? And drums? I was playing with drums before I ever got anywhere. People say how can it be folk music when you've got electrified guitar and drums! Ha!"

"These instruments are real. I like them. Aren't they the things everybody uses when they start out? You don't start singing by yourself- you sometimes have drums."

How did Bob write his songs? What exactly provoked strong messages in songs like *The Times They Are A-Changin'* and *Masters Of War*?

"The message isn't in the words," Dylan replied. **"I don't do anything with a sort of message. I'm just transferring my thoughts into music. Nobody can give you a message like that."**

"All I can hope to do is sing what I'm thinking, and maybe remind you of something. Don't put me down as a man with a message."

"My songs are just me talking to myself. Maybe that's an egotistical thing to say, but that's what it is."

"I have no responsibility to anybody except myself. If people like me – fine. If they don't, then maybe I'll do something else."

"Songs are just pictures of what I'm seeing – glimpses of things – life, maybe, as it's going on around. They're not confined to words you hear."

"They are scattered between different things, and the lead for the listener will lie in the title of the song."

"Y'know, every one of my songs could be written better. This used to bother me, but it doesn't anymore. There's nothing perfect anywhere, so I shouldn't expect myself to be perfect."

Exactly where and when did he write *Times*?

"I can't remember the exact mood I was in when I wrote it," said Bob, **"I seem to recall myself looking at this gigantic park or canyon. No, I was on 42nd Street."**

"People were moving. There was a bitterness about at that time. People were getting the wrong idea."

Dylan shrugged when asked what they were getting the wrong idea about.

"It was nothing to do with age or parents, this song," he said, searching for words to express himself.

"But this is what it was maybe – a bitterness towards authority – the type of person who sticks his nose down and doesn't take you seriously, but expects YOU to take HIM seriously."

"Another thing about *Times They Are A-Changin'* – I wanted to say in it that if you have something that you don't want to lose, and people threaten you, you are not really free."

"That's one thing I wanted to get in the song. Well, I don't know if the song is true, but the feeling's true. Oh yeah. It's no good saying there's no answer to things – It's freedom of expression I want. And it's nothing to do with a political party or religion. It's in yourself."

What about *Subterranean*?

"Don't know what to say about that song. I feel bad about it. I can understand every word because I wrote it, but it isn't recorded as good as it ought to have been recorded."

"The words are rather squeezed together. You could call it an unconscious poem set to music. I'm not going to write anything or sing anything I don't want to do. That song's NOT a put-on, like somebody said."

"Nobody's going to push me into writing rock and roll songs. That's something I don't want to do."

Which of his songs are his favourites?

"Oh, I guess *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue*, *She Belongs To Me*, and right now *Maggie's Farm*. Cynthia Lennon likes that best."

Bob has struck up a close friendship with John Lennon and Dylan said they had thought about swapping ideas for songs.

"I sent John these pictures – two pictures we had fixed to the roof of my car, but you know, he didn't get them. I got John's address wrong. These pictures we used to look at, if anybody got brought down. They were just ideas."

"But now I've got his address and I'm going to send him some things if anything comes into my mind."

"I dig John. As a writer, a singer, and a Beatle. There are very few people I dig every time I meet them, but him I dig. He doesn't take things so seriously as so many guys do. I like that."

Now the Dylan-Donovan saga has passed its peak what did Bob think of the British boy who has been accused of copying him?

"I heard his LP. I like *Catch The Wind*. I like him. He's young, you know I think some time, if he keeps on going, he'll be okay. He's got to keep going, he mustn't get stuck – I mean I don't think anybody could get hold of his head. He might get stuck bad if someone gets hold of his head."

"He's got to get into something terribly new. He can't play and sing as well as a lot of people in the United States. But he does have everything they don't have. He's groovy. Yeah, but does he KNOW? There are two kinds of know. With a small k and a capital K and I hope he knows with a capital one."

Dylan on money:

"I don't depend on money. I don't take any interest in it. It goes into some kind of bank. I contribute to some organisation called S.N.C.C. – the Student's Non-violent Coordinating Committee. That's a group in the States helping the Negroes down south. They're young people – not frustrated leaders or anything, they're good people."

"I buy anything I want to buy, but that's not much. I have to buy clothes all the time because I leave them around wherever I go."

"I could buy a Cadillac. I have a motorcycle, and that is all. There's a station wagon we used to transport things around. I have a little car – a Chevy, but it's a wreck. That's all I need, y'know. I have the money thing clearly sorted out in my mind."

"My mind works in – er, kinda strange ways."

Dylan on politics:

"No politics. It would be just impossible for me to stand up and be associated with any political party. They're all crap – every single one of them is crap. They all think they are better than the next one. Huh."

"It's OK for someone who wants to be in a political party, but not me. They stand up there trying to tell what is good and what's bad and what ought to be done."

"They've got a commodity to sell and that commodity is themselves. Politics is just a commercial bandwagon."

Dylan on his future:

"I have these things ready – plays and things. Nothing's finished. I live in the present. It's hard for me to look beyond today. Every time I try to do otherwise and plan for the future, it doesn't pay off. I know I write a lot of stuff, but exactly what shape it'll take has yet to be decided."

Dylan on being called a poet:

"Everybody has their own idea of what's a poet. Robert Frost, President Johnson, T.S. Eliot, Rudolph Valentino – they're all poets. I like to think of myself as the one who carried the lightbulb."

On why he shuns convention:

"I have nothing to say against suits, and nothing to say in their favor either. Why should I wear a suit? To go and eat supper? I have nothing against ties. It never struck me before people asked questions that I never wore a tie."

"MUST I wear a tie? It's nice of people to show their concern and interest in what I wear. I don't share it."

Dylan having the last word on his fans:

"I don't think they were going to any cult meeting. It is downgrading those people to say that. Those people who say it's a cult are just searching for some kind of a reply to me."

On his brilliantly pertinent song *Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*:

"I wrote it at the time of the Cuban crisis. I was in Bleeker street in New York. We just hung around at night – people sat around wondering if it was the end, and so did I. Would ten o'clock the next day ever come? What was going to happen?"

"Well I wrote that song to the tune of *Buffalo Skinner*. An old cowboy song. It was a song of desperation. What would we do? Could we control men on the verge of wiping us out?"

"The words came fast. Very fast. It was a song of terror. Line after line after line, trying to capture the feeling of nothingness."

"Repetition – I kept repeating things I feared. I don't know what it was like here at the time of Cuba, but – well, we who thought about it felt – er, sore. Just sore."

On Russia:

"I'd like to go out of curiosity. I don't have any great expectations of Russia, Cuba or France. I don't have any heroes."

On Religion:

"I don't think religion can show anybody how to live. I don't have any religion."

On Death:

"I used to be afraid of it, but no more. Great men die – Shakespeare died. Napoleon died. We all die. I used to worry about the world, but there ought to be enough other people worried about it to let me free."

On Life:

"If anything influences my songs, life does. I could write songs called *Where's My Baby Gone*? I'm not putting them down, but I want to say things different. I guess my songs are really about love – love of life."

"I don't want to be regarded as a threat. I just hope that if people do listen they'll think harder. I just want to see people happy."

12 May 1965
Laurie Henshaw Interview, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 583-585.
Disc Weekly, 22 May 1965, page 6.

Laurie Henshaw was a reporter for the *Disc & Music Weekly*. This interview was printed in *Disc Weekly* on May 22 1965 under the title *Mr. Send Up*. According to Heylin (*Behind The Shades*) Henshaw encountered a Dylan if anything ruder than he was to Judson, However, his stream of put-ons delighted Henshaw who published the interview as it was claiming he had secured Dylan's most outrageous interview to date. And indeed he probably had.

LH: Can you tell me when and where you were born?

BD: No, you can go and find out. There's many biographies and you can look to that. You don't ask me where I was born, where I lived. Don't ask me those questions. You find out from other papers.

LH: I'd rather hear it from you.

BD: I'm not going to tell you.

LH: Can you tell me exactly when you entered the profession? When you first started writing songs?

BD: When I was 12.

LH: And you were writing poetry at the time? And you are writing a book now?

BD: I've got a book done.

LH: Is it already published?

BD: It's going to be published in the fall.

LH: What's it called?

BD: I'm not going to tell you.

LH: Can you give me an idea what it is about?

BD: No.

LH: Can you tell me your favorite song among the ones you've written?

BD: I don't have any. I've no personal songs that I wouldn't consider apart from any other.

LH: You must obviously make a lot of money nowadays?

BD: I spend it all. I have six Cadillacs. I have four houses. I have a plantation in Georgia. Oh, I'm also working on a rocket. A little rocket. Not a big rocket. Not the kind of rocket they have in Cape Canaveral. I don't know about those kind of rockets.

LH: Do you have personal things – cameras, watches and that sort of thing?

BD: No, I don't. I buy cars. I have a lot of cars, the Cadillacs. I also have a few Oldsmobiles, about three.

LH: Do you have fears about anything political.

BD: No.

LH: Of course your songs have a very strong content...

BD: Have you heard ray songs?

LH: I have. 'Masters Of War'. 'Blowin' In The Wind'.

BD: What about 'Spanish Lover"! (sic) **Have you heard that? Why don't you listen to that? Listen, I couldn't care less what your paper writes about me. Your paper can write anything, don't you realize? The people that listen to me don't read your paper, you know, to listen to me. I'm not going to be known from your paper.**

LH: You're already known. Why be so hostile?

BD: Because you're hostile to me. You're using me. I'm an object to you. I went through this before in the United States, you know. There's nothing personal. I've nothing against you at all. I just don't want to be bothered with your paper, that's all. I just don't want to be a part of it. Why should I have to go along with something just so that somebody

else can eat? Why don't you just say that my name is Kissenovitch. You know, and I, er, come from Acapulco, Mexico. That my father was an escaped thief from South Africa. OK. You can say anything you want to say.

LH: Let's talk about you. Your clothes for instance. Are your taste in clothes changing at all?

BD: I like clothes. I don't have any particular interests at all. I like to wear drapes, umbrellas, hats.

LH: You're not going to tell me you carry an umbrella.

BD: I most certainly do carry an umbrella. Where I come from everybody carries an umbrella. Have you ever been to South Dakota? Well, I come from South Dakota, and in South Dakota people carry umbrellas.

LH: What would you say has been the greatest influence in your life?

BD: You! Your paper happens to influence me a lot. I'm going to go out and write a song after I've seen you – you know – what I'm used for. I feel what I'm doing and I feel what your paper does. And you have the nerve and gall to ask me what influences me and why do I think I'm so accepted. I don't want to be interviewed by your paper. I don't need it. You don't need it either. You can build up your own star. Why don't you just get a lot of money and bring some kid out here from the north of England and say "We're gonna make you a star! You just comply with everything, everything we do. Every time you want an interview you can just sign a paper that means we can have an interview and write what we want to write. And you'll be a star and make money!" Why don't you just do that? I'm not going to do it for you.

LH: Why should we bother to interview you if we didn't think you were worth interviewing?

BD: Because I'm news. That's why I don't blame you, you have a job to do. I know that. There's nothing personal here. But don't try to pick up too much you know.

LH: When did you start making records?

BD: I started making records in 1947, that was my first recording. A race record. I made it down south. Actually the first record I made was in 1935. John Hammond came and recorded me. Discovered me in 1935, sitting on a farm. The man who discovered Benny Goodman saw me down the street. He had me in to do a session. It happened just like that. Otherwise I wouldn't be here.

LH: Do you have a favorite guitar?

BD: Favorite guitar? I have 33 guitars! How can you have one favorite? I'm going to quit playing the guitar anyway. I'm playing the banjo.

LH: Have you heard Manfred Mann doing '*With God On Our Side*'?

BD: No, I haven't heard it. I've only heard about it.

LH: It was sung on "*Ready Steady Goes Live*" and it made quite an impact.

BD: I would like to have seen it.

LH: How do you feel about other groups doing your songs?

BD: Well, how would you feel about other groups doing your songs?

LH: I'd be complemented.

BD: I'd feel the same as you.

LH: What sort of people do you like? What type do you cultivate?

BD: I would cultivate the kind of person that sticks to his job. Sticks to his job and gets his job done. And is not too nervous. But nervous enough not to come back!

LH: What kind of people do you take an instant dislike to?

BD: I take an instant dislike to people that shake a lot. An instant dislike – wham! Most of the time I throw them against a wall. I have a body guard, Toppo. (Dylan here puts his hands to his mouth and calls to the next room) **TOPPO! Is Toppo in there? I have a bodyguard to get rid of people like that. He comes out and wipes them out. He wiped out three people last week.**

LH: Do you paint?

BD: Yeah, sure.

LH: What sort of painting.

BD: I painted my house

At this point, Dylan abruptly ended the interview.

12 May 1965
Sales Messages, Levy's Recording Studio, London, England

Sources: Circulating tape
Record Mirror, 22nd May 1965; published in *Positively Tie Dream*, pp. 11-13.

Hi! Thank you very much for selling so many of my records. I'll see you next year in New York. God bless you.

More?

Hi! This is Bob. Thank you very much for selling so many of my records. I wish I could be there with you right now this minute but unfortunately I'm all tied up. I'll see you when you come around to see me next time. God bless you all and keep selling a lot of records.

Here's a bit coloured report of the session as printed in *Positively Tie Dream*:

DYLAN'S LONDON ALBUM

The following article is taken from *RECORD MIRROR* 22nd May 1965.

Wednesday, May 11th was the date fixed. The place – Levy's Recording Studios in London's New Bond Street. The time, 7. 30. all this was classified information, for the artiste – to be recorded in the kind of secrecy normally reserved for sessions by the Beatles – was Bob Dylan.

Tom Wilson, Dylan's personal recording manager was checking through the array of switches and dials and monster tape reels. Tom is an impressive figure, six feet six in all, who radiates efficiency from his twinkling spectacles and gleaming smile down to his size 12 chukka boots. "Hiya feller," he beamed, shaking hands. "Welcome to the session." He waved towards the grand piano and the two electric pianos. "We're gonna try a little experimental stuff tonight – some new material Bobby wants to get on tape. Maybe we'll get an album out of it, maybe not. Anyway it should be interesting."

At five to eight the door opened. Albert Grossman, Dylan's manager, and his attractive wife Sally entered, followed by two musicians bearing guitars, three pretty girls who made up, later in the evening, a backing chorus, and then the famous, slight figure of Dylan himself. The fluffy, tousled hair, cigarette in the corner of his mouth, the dark shades.

Dylan, Grossman and Wilson consulted with each other. More people arrived. Jamaican folk-singer Nadia Catouse, English songwriter Sidney Carter, Paul Jones of the Manfred Mann group, rhythm and blues man John Mayall.

Wilson entered his control room. Bob went to sit in a little sound-proof booth with a couple of mikes in front of him. "OK" Wilson's amplified voice came over the studio speakers. "Do the announcement. You know, the Miami one."

"Hello there folks!" Dylan grinned sheepishly and ruffled his hair as he spoke into the mike. **"Great to be here in Miami and I sure wish I could really be with all you folks now but I'm kinda tied up. Anyway, God bless y'all and thanks for buyin' ma records."** "And again" said Wilson, booming through the speaker. **"Hello, folks,"** said Bob, shifting from foot to foot. **"This is Bob here, Bob Dylan. I', I'm really sorry I can't be with you..."**

Mr. Grossman, Dylan's manager, moved silently through the studio. "There's wine out the back," he announced softly. "Bob always has wine."

People went to get wine.

At 8.30, Bob moved to the grand piano. Technicians placed screens strategically around him, testing for the right acoustics. A session drummer in the corner gave a tentative roll on his snare drum.

A guitarist next to Dylan and his piano did a couple of riffs in time with the boogie beat Bob was churning out. Bob turned to the three girls who were to be his chorus. **"Er, kin you kinda go 'um, um' or somethin behind this one. Huh?"** They all nodded and began to go **"um"**.

"I've really enjoyed this trip, seeing Britain and the British music scene you know." Al Grossman, paper cup full of wine in hand, was talking in a corner with Sidney Carter. "Last night we met some ordinary cats in a coffee house you know. We talked to them, they talked to us. It's great – the first time we've managed to really contact people who are not connected with the business."

Dylan, across the studio, finished his second number and picked up an electric guitar. He made no announcements, and his singing was inaudible in the soundproofed room. Only the accompaniment, the driving guitar and drums backing first heard on 'Subterranean' came across.

"We're going to play around and try and can something tonight," said Grossman. "We'll finish around eleven, I guess. Then we are flying out to the continent at one o'clock. We'll be back next week to tape this TV show of Bobbie's before he can go home."

Dylan had picked up a harmonica and was blowing blues. **"Say,"** he said, **"this is a strange harmonica! Ain't played one like this before. Anybody got another one?"** Someone had. He launched into another blusey number. Half a dozen bottles of wine had disappeared.

It was after ten. Clutching paper cups, four or five people clustered around the control room door, listening to the sound of Dylan as it went down on tape. One of the huge tape reels, revolving slowly, was almost filled. Tom Wilson, for once unsmiling, sat intently over his mike and his switches. "Come on Dylan," he said over the loudspeaker. "Try it again the way you wrote it." Bob obliged.

Nine bottles of wine had disappeared. "Try some of this stuff," said Sally Grossman – the girl in the red dress featured on the cover of Bob's latest album – "it's sweet stuff, but it'll do. But leave some for the artiste."

As it happened, the artiste didn't need it. For while ev'ryone was talking, and the recording technicians were discussing takes, and there were no eyes on him, Bob Dylan and his barber artiste friend opened the studio door and slipped quietly away.

James Craig

June 1965
Bob Dylan on The Byrds as told in Melody Maker

Source: *Melody Maker*, 5 June 1965, page 5;
reprinted in *NME Originals: Bob Dylan and the Folk Rock Boom 1964-1974*, p. 24.

MM, 5 June 1965, page 5
DYLAN AND THE BYRDS

INTO the Pop 50 at 37 this week flew Hollywood's Byrds. They're friends of Bob Dylan, seen here sitting in with them during a West Coast concert. And the song that has seen them "home" is a Dylan favourite, "*Mr Tambourine Man*". Says Bob of the Byrds: **"They are good musicians—they know what they are doing."**

June 1965
KRLA Beat Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 793-794.

According to Heylin (*A Life In Stolen Moments*), this interview took place sometime mid to late June 1965. It appeared in the July 7th edition of Britain's KRLA Beat magazine. This has been taken from a reprint in Heylin's booklet *The Bob Dylan Interviews – A List*.

FAMOUS SONGWRITER BOB DYLAN MYSTERY MAN TO MOST AMERICANS

Who is Bob Dylan, the man who is causing such a sensation on today's pop scene?

Since he has been relatively ignored by the American Press he is kind of a mystery man here, despite the records, concerts and dozens of hit songs he has written for other entertainers.

Most people are familiar with the name, but not with the man. Who is this eccentric-looking song writer? What does he possess? What does he believe in? Or does he believe in anything at all?

Because he is the hottest American artist in England, because his album *Bring It All Back Home* is riding high in the American charts, and because he has made some rather interesting and controversial comments about today's world, we feel it is time for the BEAT to introduce you to the man Bob Dylan.

Is there a Dylan cult?

The image – there's nothing to it. If someone wants to believe something about me, they can. It doesn't matter a little bit to me. At one time it did, That was some years ago when I was on the streets and trying to make some impression. Right now, I don't care what people think – the cult is something other people talk about. Not me.

Do his songs contain some kind of message?

The message isn't in the words. I don't do anything with a sort of message. I'm just transferring my thoughts into music. All I can hope to do is sing what I'm thinking, and maybe remind you of something. Don't put me down as a man with a message. My songs are just me talking to myself.

John Lennon has sung Dylan's praises all over England, but what does Dylan think of Lennon?

I dig John. As a writer, a singer and a Beatle. I dig everytime I meet them, but him I dig. He doesn't take things seriously as so many guys do. I like that.

What does Dylan think about money?

I don't depend on the money. I don't take any interest in it. It goes into some kinda bank. I buy anything I want to buy, but that's not much. I have to buy clothes all the time because I leave them around wherever I go, I have a little car – a Chevy, but it's a wreck. That's all I need, y'know? I have the money thing clearly sorted out in my mind..

What about politics?

No politics. Politics is just a commercial bandwagon.

What about his clothes, how comes he never wears a suit and tie?

I have nothing to say against suits and nothing to say in their favor either. Why should I wear a suit? To go and eat supper? I have nothing against ties. It never struck me before people asked questions that I never wore a tie. Must I wear a tie? It's nice of people to show their concern in what I wear. I don't share it.

How does Dylan feel about religion?

I don't think religion can show anybody how to live. I don't have any religion.

What about death?

I used to be afraid of it, but no more. Great men die – Shakespeare died, Napoleon died. We all die.

Well then what does he think about life?

If anything influences my songs, life does. I could write songs called *Where's My Baby Gone*? I'm not putting them down, but I want to say things different. I guess catastrophe and confusion are the basis of my songs. But basically my songs are really about love – love of life.

This is Bob Dylan, folksinger and poet, the most successful writer of folk songs in the world today. You may like him or dislike him, agree with him or disagree with him. He doesn't particularly care. Despite his outstanding commercial success he seems to be looking for something else. And perhaps he has found it.

1 June 1965
Disc Weekly report on the BBC sessions, London, England

Source: *Disc Weekly*, 12 June 1965, page 8
reprinted in *NME Originals: Bob Dylan and the Folk Rock Boom 1964-1974*, p. 24.

Disc Weekly, 12 June 1965, page 8
DYNAMIC DYLAN!
Now millions of people can see what he is really like on two special BBC TV performances

On Tuesday of last week Bob Dylan taped his two shows for BBC TV. The previous session had been cancelled because of his illness and the programmes – at least half an hour each – are now scheduled to go out on June 19 at 10. 50 and June 26 at 10. 30. Both shows are different, and in both he is entirely on his own. In fact, they will be just like his concert performances and that means DYNAMIC! as reporter Penny Valentine and Phil May of The Pretty Things discovered when they went to the taping.

It is a quarter to eight at the BBC studios in London. There is an audience of 300 but the place is very quiet as everyone waits for Dylan.

Mrs Al Grossman, Dylan's manager's wife, sits in the front row wearing a suit and leather boots. A fat man with a bald patch sits further along with a sketch pad. The Pretty Things sit in a line with intent faces.

Just past eight Dylan appears at the side of the studio. He wears a black leather jacket, dark sweater and trousers, his harmonica harness round his neck. He looks pale and tired after his illness. He ambles out round a camera to the applause and stops next to a bright red leather stool. He stands by the mic, tuning up. On the monitor screens above our heads appears the picture of a girl on a beach. Dylan adjusts his harness and plays the guitar softly as the cameras angle up.

Cue card

"Hey wait a minute," he mumbles, and a young man in a super-smart corduroy jacket suddenly appears from nowhere. **"I can't see those cue cards,"** Dylan explains. **"You'll have to bring them right up – I've got bad eyes."**

They bring the cue cards nearer and he fixes another harmonica into his harness. The hot lights have affected the strings on his guitar again and he turns away from the audience, listening intently as he runs through the chords.

The young man in the jacket says that sounds fine to him.

"It doesn't to me," says Dylan. **"I've got bad ears too!"**

Some sort of magic seems suddenly to have hit the entire proceedings with Dylan's grin and joke. We all laugh.

The red stool is unused by Dylan throughout the two shows. He stands, feet slightly apart, head a little back. He makes no attempt at introducing the songs. His attitude is the same as he adopts at his concerts – that his audience should know his work without explanation.

The only time he does offer an introduction is on '*It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)*' when he says the title and adds: **"This is a funny song, ho, ho, ho."**

Striking

The stool carries his extra harmonica and a crumpled piece of paper on which Dylan has written down the titles of the songs he will do. On the screens the face of Dylan alternates between hatred and love. He comes over strikingly well. In the first show he sings effortlessly through songs including '*One Too Many Mornings*' and '*She Belongs to Me*'. In the studios he has a 15-minute break.

At rehearsals he did '*Maggie's Farm*' and then decided not to sing it after all. His second show includes the very funny '*If You Gotta Go, Go Now*' and '*Mr Tambourine Man*'.

Inserts

On '*Mr Tambourine Man*' there are filmed inserts of a fairground shown over Dylan on his guitar. At the end of the tapings Dylan crouches, his chin cupped in his hands, watching the credits coming over the monitor sets. As the last glimpse of a now static Dylan face is shown on the set he stands up and looks satisfied. He says his thanks to the camera crew and once more to the audience and then quietly walks away.

Penny Valentine

25 July 1965
Jeffrey Jones Interview, Newport Folk Festival 1965
(Published 18 December 1975)

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 187-190

Is this the real Mr. Jones, of Ballad fame?

July 25th 1965, Jeffrey Jones, then a part-time reporter for *Time* magazine, conducted a rather trite interview with Dylan at the Newport Folk Festival. Subsequently he began to ponder on whether he was the enigmatic Mr. Jones in *Ballad Of A Thin Man*. His 1975 article in *Rolling Stone* shows why.

It happened in the summer of 1965 at the Newport Folk Festival. Dylan's version of the encounter goes like this: (Here he quotes the first verse of the song). Mr. Jones – the rational fool, the geek gawker, the college-educated babe-in-the-woods, the quintessential square, the anti-hero of the sixties. Even now it is like owning up to a war crime to suggest that... I am Mr. Jones.

I can't prove it, but I am convinced that Dylan used me as the unwitting model for his Mr. Jones.

As a college student with a summer job in the New York bureau of *Time* magazine, I concocted a story idea on the rebirth of harmonica in popular music. The article was to be built around a then obscure harp player from Chicago named Paul Butterfield who, I had heard, was going to make a big splash at the upcoming folk festival in Newport. I sent the suggestion to *Times* music editor, and to my surprise, back came a memo advising me to go ahead. Attached to the memo was a yellow sheet of paper called a "query", listing the questions that my reporting should answer and directing me to "get quotes" from celebrities to support the story.

A week later I pirouetted slowly in the dust of a Newport, Rhode Island field, dazzled by the high sun of a July morning. In my pocket was the yellow query sheet. I'd interviewed Butterfield and things were going fine.

Suddenly I saw Joan Baez. She was radiant, more beautiful than any picture of her I had ever studied. Bearing a saintly smile, she glided like a prophet, with a clutch of young girls as her train. They reached out but did not quite touch her, and cried ecstatically, "Oh, Joan!" I saw then that my job was impossible. How was I, an awed college kid, to write anything authoritative?

"Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me..."

Bob Dylan's flat tenor rose above a throng seated at the perimeter of the storm fenced festival arena. I walked toward the crowd, noting on my program that he was part of an informal "workshop" session.

Near the workshop stage, next to a van filled with sound equipment I met a high-cheeked woman with silver-blonde hair. It was Mary Travers, then of Peter, Paul and Mary. I asked her questions prepared by *Time*. She asked if I would like to talk with Dylan. I nodded stiffly.

"Wait here," she said.

Dylan had finished his set and was surrounded by chattering fans. Mary Travers grabbed his hand and led him to me.

We were engulfed by a swelling group of mostly teenage girls. Dylan pointed to the open side of the van. We climbed in and took seats amid hot amplifiers. Dylan's fans surrounded the vehicle, squealing his name, pounding the sides of the truck. The van began to rock.

"Yeah?" said Dylan.

As I opened my mouth to speak, he waved out of a window, then blocked the glass with a curtain and assumed a bored slouch.

"I'm doing this story for *Time* on the harmonica," I said, "and it seems to be, like, very important in folk music. I mean, after the guitar, probably the second-most-played instrument. They wanted me to find out what you think."

"Yeah, man," he said, half laughing, **"the harmonica is really big."**

The van rocked again.

"Well," I asked, nearly choking on the crushing banality of every word, "is it because of your influence?"

"No, man, the harmonica is just a good instrument, and it's been around a long while, you know what I mean?"

Dylan was polite, but impatient. I plunged on.

"Time has this way of doing stories where they use what they call a "peg", which is some person they build a story around. Paul Butterfield is the peg in this story, because they say he's going to be big. What do you think?"

Pause

"Butterfield is great, man, great." There was exasperation in his voice. **"Look,"** he said, **"for me right now there are three groups: Butterfield, The Byrds and the Sir Douglas Quintet."** I couldn't tell if he was putting me on.

Dylan shot me a glance and I was rocked by a strange beauty in his ferret face, and by his eyes, which were alive and as maddeningly impenetrable as a cat's.

Dylan seized the silence.

"Is that all, man?" he said.

"Yeah, thanks a lot for your time." I smiled wanly and extended a shaking hand. He took it limply. Then he climbed out the van door amid the fans, who swallowed him as he walked to a waiting car.

That evening, in the hotel dining room, I pleaded with Butterfield to give me some more time alone.

Then I heard laughing and a raucous shuffling of chairs behind me. Dylan – with an entourage that included Donovan, Bob Neuwirth and several slinky women – was being seated at the next table. I raised my hand in a tentative salute. Dylan hailed me with hollow delight.

"Mr. Jones," Dylan shouted from the chair he'd taken, **"Gettin' it all down, Mr. Jones?"**

There was laughter at his table.

"*Time* magazine," he called with mock enthusiasm. **"You going to write a story for Time magazine, Mr. Jones?"**

More laughter and jibes. I smiled and nodded, feeling like the village idiot, flattered by attention and defensively dumbstruck.

Later, in the lobby, I spied the elfin figure of Donovan. My multi-purpose query had instructed me also to keep an eye on Donovan. I approached him without hesitation. Already humiliated, I now felt recklessly brash. I followed at Donovan's side as he moved out the front door of the hotel and across an asphalt parking lot towards a motel-like annex.

"Okay if I walk with you?" I asked cheerily.

"Well, there's this party, you see..."

I stuck by him anyway, until we arrived at a room on the second floor of the annex. Music and loud voices came through the door.

"Well, see ya now," Donovan said as he knocked. The door opened and, as Donovan slipped in, I saw Dylan sitting on the edge of a couch, a girl by his side. The door closed quickly. I waited five seconds, then knocked.

Five more seconds passed.

The door flew open. Bob Neuwirth came crashing out and fell flat on his back at my feet, staring at the ceiling. Dylan bounced up and down on the edge of the couch, laughing. Neuwirth suddenly scrambled to his feet, gave me a frantic look, then sprang back through the open door and slammed it, as though he were locking out a demon. I walked away.

The next day Butterfield's scheduled big splash was postponed by rain. Later, part of the Butterfield band backed Dylan during his famous electric-axe inaugural. The audience wanted to hear *Baby Blue* and booed when it got *Subterranean Homesick Blues* instead. It was a stormy coming out party for what Time later called "folk-rock" and I had missed the point totally.

Highway 61 Revisited appeared the following Autumn. When I heard **Ballad Of A Thin Man**, I knew right then who Mr. Jones was. I was thrilled – in the tainted way I suppose a felon is thrilled to see his name in the newspaper. I was awed too that Dylan had so accurately read my mind. I resented the caricature but had to admit that there was something happening there at Newport in the summer of 1965, and I didn't know what it was.

In retrospect, it has occurred to me that Dylan might not have known either.

Late Summer 1965
Nora Ephron & Susan Edmiston Interview, Forest Hills, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 795-800.

This interview took place late August to early September 1965 in the office of Dylan's manager Albert Grossman and was intended for an article in the *New York Post*. Dylan had just been booed in the historic Forest Hills concert where he abandoned folk purity to the use of electric accompaniment. He was wearing a red-and-navy op-art shirt, a navy blazer and pointy high-heeled boots. His face, so sharp and harsh when translated through the media, was then infinitely soft and delicate. His hair was not bushy or electric or Afro; it was fine-spun soft froth like the foam of a wave. He looked like an underfed angel with a nose from the land of the Chosen People. (Ephron and Edmiston's own introduction).

E/E = Ephron / Edmiston

E/E: Some American folk singers – Carolyn Hester, for example – say that what you're now doing, the new sound, "folk rock", is liberating them.

BD: Did Carolyn say that? You tell her she can come around and see me any time now that she's liberated.

E/E: Does labeling, using the term "folk rock", tend to obscure what's happening?

BD: Yes.

E/E: It's like "pop gospel". What does the term mean to you?

BD: Yeah, classical gospel could be the next trend. There's country rock, rockabilly. What does it mean to me? Folk rock. I've never even said that word. It has a hard, gutter sound. Circussy atmosphere. It's nose-thumbing. Sound like you're looking down on what is... fantastic, great music.

E/E: The definition most often given of folk rock is the combination of the electronic sound of rock and roll with the meaningful lyrics of folk music. Does that sum up what you're doing?

BD: Yes. It's very complicated to play with electricity. You play with other people. You're dealing with other people. Most people don't like to work with other people, it's more difficult. It takes a lot. Most people who don't like rock and roll can't relate to other people.

E/E: You mention the Apollo Theatre in Harlem on one of your album covers. Do you go there often?

BD: Oh, I couldn't go up there. I used to go up there a lot about four years ago. I even wanted to play in one of the amateur nights, but I got scared. Bad things can happen to you. I saw what the audience did to a couple of guys they didn't like. And I would have had a couple of things against me right away when I stepped out on the stage.

E/E: Who is *Mr. Jones*, in *Ballad Of A Thin Man*?

BD: He's a real person, you know him, but not by that name.

E/E: Like Mr. Charlie?

BD: No. He's more than Mr. Charlie. He's actually a person. Like I saw him come into the room one night and he looked like a camel. He proceeded to put his eyes in his pocket. I asked this guy who he was and he said: "That's Mr. Jones." Then I asked this cat: "Doesn't he do anything but put his eyes in his pocket?" And he told me: "He puts his nose on the ground." It's all there. It's a true story.

E/E: Where did you get that shirt?

BD: California. Do you like it? You should see my others. You can't get clothes like that here. There are a lot of things out there we haven't got here.

E/E: Isn't California on the way here?

BD: It's uptight here compared to there. Hollywood, I mean. It's not really breathable here. It's like there's air out there. The Sunset Strip can't be compared to anything here, like Forty-second Street. The people there look different, they look more like... you want to kiss them out there.

E/E: Do you spend a lot of time out there?

BD: I don't have much time to spend anywhere. The same thing in England. In England everybody looks very hip East Side. They wear things... they don't wear things that bore you. They've got other hang-ups in other directions.

E/E: Do you consider yourself primarily a poet?

BD: No. We have our ideas about poets. The word doesn't mean any more than the word "house". There are people who write *po*ems and people who write po*ems*. Other people write poems. Everybody who writes poems do you call them a poet? There's a certain kind of rhythm in some kind of way that's visible. You don't necessarily have to write to be a poet. Some people work in gas stations and they're poets. I don't call myself a poet because I don't like the word. I'm a trapeze artist.

E/E: What I meant was, do you think your words stand without the music?

BD: They would stand but I don't read them. I'd rather sing them. I write things that aren't songs – I have a book coming out.

E/E: What is it?

BD: It's a book of words.

E/E: Is it like the back of your albums? It seemed to me that the album copy you write is a lot like the writing of William Burroughs. Some of the accidental sentences –

BD: Cut-ups.

E/E: Yes, and some of the imagery and anecdotes. I wondered if you had read anything by him.

BD: I haven't read *Naked Lunch* but I have read some of his shorter things in little magazines, foreign magazines. I read one in Rome. I know him. I don't really know him – I just met him once. I think he's a great man.

E/E: Burroughs keeps an album, a collection of photographs that illustrate his writing. Do you have anything similar to that?

BD: I do that, too. I have photographs of *Gates Of Eden* and *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue*. I saw them after I wrote the songs. People send me a lot of things and a lot of the things are pictures, so other people must have that idea too. I gotta admit, maybe I wouldn't have chosen them, but I can see what it is about the pictures.

E/E: I heard you used to play the piano for Buddy Holly.

BD: No. I used to play the rock and roll piano, but I don't want to say who it was for because the cat will try to get hold of me. I don't want to see the cat. He'll try to reclaim the friendship. I did it a long time ago, when I was seventeen years old. I used to play a country piano too.

E/E: This was before you became interested in folk music?

BD: Yes. I became interested in folk music because I had to make it somehow. Obviously I'm not a hard-working cat. I played the guitar, that was all I did. I thought it was great music. Certainly I haven't turned my back on it or anything like that. There is – and I'm sure nobody realises this, all the authorities who write about what it is and what it should be, when they say keep things simple, they should be easily understood – folk music is the only music where it isn't simple. It's weird, man, full of legend, myth, bible and ghosts. I've never written anything hard to understand, not in my head, anyway, and nothing as far out as some of the old songs. They were out of sight.

E/E: Like what songs?

BD: *Little Brown Dog, "I bought a little brown dog, its face is all gray. Now I'm going to Turkey flying on my bottle."* And *Nottemun Town*, that's like a herd of ghosts passing through on the way to Tangiers. *Lord Edward*, *Barbara Allen*, they're full of myth.

E/E: And contradictions?

BD: Yeah, contradictions.
E/E: And chaos?
BD: Chaos, watermelon, clocks, everything.
E/E: You wrote on the back of one album: "I accept chaos but does chaos accept me?"
BD: Chaos is a friend of mine. It's like I accept him, does he accept me?
E/E: Do you see the world as chaos?
BD: Truth is chaos. Maybe beauty is chaos.
E/E: Poets like Eliot and Yeats -
BD: I haven't read Yeats.
E/E: They saw the world as chaos, accepted it as chaos and attempted to bring order from it. Are you trying to do that?
BD: No. It exists and that's all there is to it. It's been here longer than I have. What can I do about it? I don't know what the songs I write are. That's all I do is write songs, right? Write. I collect things too.
E/E: Monkey wrenches?
BD: Where did you read about that? Has that been in print? I told this guy out on the coast that I collected monkey wrenches, all sizes and shapes of monkey wrenches, and he didn't believe me. I don't think you believe me either. And I collect the pictures, too. Have you talked to Sonny and Cher?
E/E: No.
BD: They're a drag. A cat gets kicked out of a restaurant and he went home and wrote a song about it.
E/E: They say your fan mail has radically increased since you switched sounds.
BD: Yeah. I don't have time to read all of it, but I want you to put that I answer half of it. I don't really. A girl does that for me.
E/E: Does she save any for you – any particularly interesting letters?
BD: She knows my head. Not the ones that just ask for pictures, there's a file for them. Not the ones that say, I want to make it with you, they go in another file. She saves two kinds. The violently put-down -
E/E: The ones that call you a sell-out?
BD: Yeah. Sell-out, fink, fascist, red, everything in the book. I really dig those. And ones from old friends.
E/E: Like: "You don't remember me but I was in the fourth grade with you"?
BD: No, I never had any friends then. These are letters from people who knew me in New York five, six years ago. My first fans. Not the people who call themselves my first fans. They came in three years ago, two years ago. They aren't really my first fans.
E/E: How do you feel about being booed at your concert at Forest Hills?
BD: I thought it was great, I really did. If I said anything else I 'd be a liar.
E/E: And at the Newport Folk Festival?
BD: That was different. They twisted the sound. They didn't like what I was going to play and they twisted the sound on me before I began.
E/E: I hear you were wearing a sell-out jacket.
BD: What kind of a jacket is a sell-out jacket?
E/E: Black leather.
BD: I've had black leather jackets since I was five years old. I've been wearing black leather all my life.
E/E: I wonder if we could talk about electronic music and what made you decide to use it.
BD: I was doing fine, singing and playing my guitar. It was a sure thing, don't you understand, it was a sure thing. I was getting very bored with that. I couldn't go out and play like that. I was thinking of quitting. Out front it was a sure thing. I knew what the audience was gonna do, how they would react. It was very automatic. Your mind just drifts unless you can find some way to get in there and remain totally there. It's so much of a fight remaining totally there all by yourself. It takes too much. I'm not ready to cut

that much out of my life, you can't have nobody around. You can't be bothered with anybody else's world. And I like people. What I'm doing now – it's a whole other thing. We're not playing rock music. It's not a hard sound. These people call it folk rock – if they want to call it that, something that simple, it's good for selling records. As far as it being what it is, I don't know what it is. I can't call it folk rock. It's a whole way of doing things. It has been picked up on, I've heard songs on the radio that have picked it up. I'm not talking about words. It's a certain feeling, and it's been on every single record I've made. That has not changed. I know it hasn't changed. As far as what I was totally, before, maybe I was pushing it a little then. I'm not pushing things now. I know it. I know very well how to do it. The problem of how I want to play something – I know it in front. I know what I'm going to say, what I'm going to do. I don't have to work it out. The band I work with – they wouldn't be playing with me if they didn't play like I want them to. I have this song, *Queen Jane Approximately* -

E/E: Who is Queen Jane?

BD: Queen Jane is a man.

E/E: Was there something that made you decide to change sounds? Your trip to England?

BD: I like the sound. I like what I'm doing now. I would have done it before. It wasn't practical to do it before. I spent most of my time writing. I wouldn't have had the time. I had to get where I was going all alone. I don't know what I'm going to do next. I probably will record with strings sometime, but it doesn't necessarily change. It's just a different color. And I know that it's real. No matter what anybody says. They can boo till the end of time. I know that music is real, more real than the boos.

E/E: How do you work?

BD: Most of the time I work at night. I don't really like to think of it as work. I don't know how important it is. It's not important to the average cat who works eight hours a day. What does he care? The world can get along very well without it. I'm hip to that.

E/E: Sure, but the world can get along without any number of things.

BD: I'll give you a comparison. Rudy Valee. Now that was a lie, that was a downright lie. Rudy Valee being popular. What kind of people could have dug him? You know, your grandmothers and mothers. But what kind of people were they? He was so sexless. If you want to find out about those times and you listen to his music you're not going to find out anything about the times. His music was a pipe dream. All escapes. There are no more escapes. If you want to find out anything that's happening now, you have to listen to the music. I don't mean the words, although *Eve Of Destruction* will tell you something about it. The words are not really gonna tell it, not really. You gotta listen to the Staples Singers, Smokey and the Miracles, Martha and the Vandellas. That's scary to a lot of people. It's sex that's involved. It's not hidden. It's real. You can overdo it. It's not only sex, it's a whole beautiful feeling.

E/E: But Negro rhythm and blues has been around underground for at least twelve years. What brought it out now?

BD: The English did that. They brought it out. They hipped everybody. You read an interview asking who the favorite Beatle's singer was and they say Chuck Berry. You never used to hear Chuck Berry records on the radio, hard blues. The English did that. England is great and beautiful, though in other ways kinda messy. Though not outside London.

E/E: In what way messy?

BD: There's a snobbishness. What you see people doing to other people. It's not only class. It's not that simple. It's a kind of Queen kind of thing. Some people are royalty and some are not. Here, man, somebody don't like you he tells you. There it's very tight, tight kinds of expressions. Their whole tone of speaking changes. It's an everyday kind of thing. But the kids are a whole other thing. Great. They're just more free. I hope you don't think I take this too seriously – I just have a headache.

E/E: I think you started out to say that music was more in tune with what's happening than other art forms.

BD: Great paintings shouldn't be in museums. Have you ever been in a museum? Museums are cemeteries. Paintings should be on the walls of restaurants, in dime stores, in gas stations, in men's rooms. Great paintings should be where people hang out. The only thing where it's happening is on the radio and the records. That's where people hang out. You can't see great paintings. You pay half a million and hang one in your house and one guest sees it. That's not art. That's a shame, a crime. Music is the only thing that's in tune with what's happening. It's not in book form, it's not on the stage. All this art they've been talking about is non-existent. It just remains on the shelf. It doesn't make anyone happier. Just think how many people would really feel great if they could see a Picasso in their daily diner. It's not the bomb that has to go, man, it's the museums.

Note: In his *More Rain Unravelled Tales,* Heylin suggests that the above may actually have been from a mini press-conference held at Forest Hills. He also points out that in the Ribakove's *Folk Rock: The Bob Dylan Story* quotes which correspond to that interview are credited to a Susan Szekeley:

"We're not playing rock music," he told columnist Susan Szekeley. **"It's not a hard sound. These people call it folk rock – if they want to call it that, something that simple, it's good for selling the records. I can't call it folk rock. I have a whole way of doing things that's been on every single record I've ever made, a certain feeling. That has not changed. I know it hasn't changed. And I know that it's real."**

Ephron and Edmiston were reporters for the *New York Post*, but I have no record of this ever having been published in that newspaper, or any other.

Late Summer 1965
Los Angeles Times

Source: *TWM* #1001

He had, said a lady reporter, a quality of detachment. He was not, for example, as accessible as Frankie Laine. **"I should hope not,"** said Dylan, **"I started in a different way. I never sang for ballroom dances. What I do now, like I don't have to prove anything. I'm not a preacher or a traveling salesman. I do what I do. There was a time I cared if anyone understood, not anymore."**

"I know what I write," he said, **"And it makes sense to me. You can't tell me what it's supposed to mean, I know."**

August/September 1965
David Moberg Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 991-992.

Dylan gave this interview to David Moberg of *Newsweek* sometime between the Forest Hills show of August 28 and publication in *Newsweek* on September 20th 1965.

THE FOLK AND THE ROCK

A kind of common-law marriage of folk song with the electric beat of rock n' roll, folk-rock is sweeping the volatile weekly record listings. Billboards latest tabulation of the best sellers crowds six folk-rock discs into it's top ten.

The Patrick Henry of this revolution is 24 year old Bob Dylan, a bony, prophet-haired poet of protest. His leave-me-be lyrics and defiant delivery have provided the movement with a mood and a language. Folk- rock really ignited last March when Dylan's ballad of hip Weltschmerz, *Mr. Tambourine Man*, was given a big-beat rendition by a new rock quintet, the Byrds, and became an instant hit. Rock groups gone folk have been ransacking Dylan's material ever since. Forty-eight of his songs have been recorded within the past month. Even groups who don't sing his songs acknowledge his influence. 'He's a force on our music,' said one of the Lovin' Spoonful, 'just like *The Star Spangled Banner* -we've all heard it.'

At a recent concert at Forest Hills, N.Y., Dylan split his hip world apart when he appeared for the second half of the concert backed by an electronic organ, electronic bass, electronic guitar and drums. After each number, folk purists in the crowd cried, 'We want Dylan, we want Dylan,' summoning their old hero, the work-shirted, cloth-capped troubadour. But the rockers in the crowd, the partisans of the new sound, rushed small raiding parties to the base of the stage to bask in the glow of their idol. Dylan had turned folknik against rocknik.

To *Newsweek* reporter David Moberg's suggestion that there might be a new Bob Dylan, the singer retorted: **'How would you like it if somebody introduced you as the 'new' Dave Moberg?'** Dylan understandably reacts with vehement negatives to the overeager labeling of the culture definers. **'I've never written a political song,'** he said. **'Songs can't save the world. I've gone through all that. When you don't like something, you gotta learn to just not need that something.'**

He is irritated by that bogey word, teen-ager: **'Teenagers? They all talk different languages. Name me a teenager. I have no recollection of being a teenager.'** He has a non-attitude to his undefined enemies: **'They can crush you. They can kill you and lay you out on 42nd Street and put the hoses on you and flush you in the sewers. They can put you on a subway out to Coney Island and bury you on a Ferris Wheel. Who cares?'** Asked if he was leading a real life, he snapped: **'If I'm leading somebody else's life, I'd like to know who the hell is leading mine.'**

The conversion of Dylan the performer to folk-rock was instinctive. **'I had this thing called *Subterranean Homesick Blues*,'** he explained. **'It just didn't sound right by myself. I tried the piano, the harpsichord. I tried it as blues. I tried it on the pipe organ, the kazoo. But it fit right in with the band. I haven't changed a bit. I just got tired of playing the guitar by myself.'** As for his imitators, Dylan says: **'I like everybody.'**

August 1965
Albert Grossman's Office,
Frances Taylor Interview, New York City, New York

Source: *Bob Dylan: A Retrospective* edited by Craig McGregor; Picador, 1975, pp. 71-73.

DYLAN DISOWNS HIS PROTEST SONGS
This article is reprinted, with permission, from the *Long Island Press* of 17 October 1965.

Now that he's on the charts where the best-sellers of the pop music world are listed, Bob Dylan disowns all the folk songs he wrote and the protest songs that made him famous. He won't sing them any more (hasn't for several months now) and he doesn't plan to write any in the future.

Dylan, until recently the adored king of folk music, no longer wears the dungarees and boots that became the uniform of the hip kids who imitated him. His halo of red-brown hair is about the only outward sign of the old Dylan. Inwardly he's calm and quite sure of his direction. **"I'm not a voice of their generation,"** he said in an interview in his manager's Manhattan office. **"How can I be? I'm not their generation."**

He's doing now, says Bobby, exactly what he's always wanted to do: blues, rhythm songs and song-stories in poetry that are startlingly beautiful... and mostly unintelligible. He thinks of his best-loved songs such as '*Blowin' in the Wind*' and '*With God on Our Side*' as dead. **"They're ghosts,"** he says.

When thousands of Long Island young people called for them at his recent, jammed concert in Forest Hills Stadium, Dylan **"didn't hear that."** He seems surprised on being told they called for those songs until they realized he had no intention of singing them.

Dylan does realize he was booed when he appeared for the second half of the concert with an electric guitar in his hands and a noisy jazz combo behind him. He remembers that thousands of youngsters chanted "We want Dylan" and "We want the real Dylan" when he launched into rock and roll. For those young people we have some sad news. Today's twenty-four-year-old rock and roll expert is the real Dylan. Bobby himself says so.

"I never wanted to write topical songs," he explains. **"Have you heard my last two records, *Bringing It All Back Home* and *Highway 61*? It's all there. That's the real Dylan."**

Why, then, did he ever write anti-war songs and songs inspired by and inspiring to the civil rights movement? **"That was my chance,"** he says frankly. **"In the Village there was a little publication called *Broadside* and with a topical song you could get in there. I wasn't getting far with the things I was doing, songs like I'm writing now, but *Broadside* gave me a start."**

It also brought him the attention and friendship of Joan Baez, undisputed queen of folk music, and Pete Seeger, for many years a folk-singer and composer known in many nations. Joan Baez brought an almost unknown Dylan onstage two years ago at her own concert in the Forest Hills Music Festival. He wasn't an instant hit – his voice almost harsh where now it's rich and stirring. But his songs were loved by tens of thousands of young people who began to buy any record he made. Soon he was their idol. He created one song after another on themes from the movement that swept every campus in the US.

What most young people don't realize is that '*Blowin' in the Wind*' made money... but not for Bobby. The trio who made the record got the lion's share. His income, right up to October of this year, was low enough to qualify him for an award from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. The ASCAP fund is for 'young artists of merit' whose work brings them insufficient income.

Where he was once proud to be the angry young man of the music world, Bobby now takes comfort in his popularity. He can fill concert halls three or four times a week. His albums sell enormously. His blues and rollicking tunes are high up on every chart. He's also on top in England where '*With God on Our Side*' is bringing in ghostly money that banks accept. **"I'm**

writing now for the people who share my feelings," he says earnestly. **"The point is not understanding what I write but feeling it."**

Of course, thinking, feeling or just plain listening, Dylan's blues are superb and his new singing style is ingratiating. His wayout poetry is full of brilliant images and marvelous color as well as sharp wit. Dylan thinks his newest work, '*Desolation Row*,' is a more important piece of music than '*Blowin' in the Wind*'. If you haven't heard the *Desolation* opus, it's a long, plaintively poetic piece about... chaos. In it Bobby writes of '*Einstein disguised as Robin Hood*' and of Ophelia whose '*sin is her lifelessness*' as well as of '*heart-attack machine... then the kerosene*'. Fire and brimstone? Purgatory? Life itself is hell?

Where he's heading now is clear to Dylan and to his newest fans who are content with '*Like a Rolling Stone*' and '*It Ain't Me, Babe*'. His older fans still play his older albums. Some of his followers still love '*Blowin' in the Wind*' and were happy to hear it played, only last week, as the finale in a Dylan salute by the Hullabaloo TV show.

His most devoted followers still hope Dylan will some day sing to them of reality, as he once did in clear, sharp tones and lyrics they can remember.

27 August 1965
Robert Shelton interview for New York Times

Source: *New York Times*, 27 August 1965

Pop Singers and Song Writers Racing Down Bob Dylan's Road
Musicians 'Sound' Inspires a Variety of Entertainers in 'Folk Rock' Idiom
By ROBERT SHELTON

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Bob Dylan must be one of the most flattered performers in American popular music today; The singer and song-writer, who will appear tomorrow night at the Forest Hills Music Festival in Queens, has fostered a trend that music circles call "the Dylan sound."

At least three groups and one individual who consciously style their singing after Mr. Dylan are listed high on popularity charts of recordings. Sonny and Cher, the Byrds, the Turtles and Donovan all have a strong Dylanesque quality in their recordings.

Many others, from the Beatles to Johnny Cash to the song-writing team of Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, have publicly acknowledged their debt to Mr. Dylan. And John Lennon has even recorded a song in the Dylan mode.

In a telephone interview, Mr. Dylan, the often enigmatic folk performer, parried questions about his new imitators and the controversy over his fusion of folk music with rock 'n' roll, called "folk rock."

'Missing Something'

"It's all music; no more, no less," the 24-year-old musician, from Hibbing. Minn., said. **"I know in my own mind what I'm doing. If anyone has imagination, he'll know what I'm doing. If they can't understand my songs they're missing something. If they can't understand green clocks, wet chairs, purple lamps or hostile statues, they're missings something, too."**

Many pop-music insiders regard Mr. Dylan as the most influential American performer to emerge since the rise of Elvis Presley 10 years ago. Some think he is on the brink of superstardom.

Mr. Dylan is a wiry, sharp-featured, sunken-eyed youth who affects a somewhat bizarre image. His hair has grown so long since he became interested in "folk rock" that the Beatles look clean-cut by comparison. After leaving Hibbing, he studied briefly at the University of Minnesota but flunked out of the science class, he says, "for refusing to watch a rabbit die."

He went on the road, playing at a carnival and elsewhere, until he got off the subway in Greenwich Village in the spring of 1961.

Since Mr. Dylan was discovered at Gerde's Folk City in September of that year, he has evolved through several composing and performing approaches. Each time he has changed he has brought an increasingly larger segment of the pop and folk music world with him.

The tousle-haired musician, who has written more than 100 songs, expressed a driving need to create and perform new material. **"I get very bored with my old songs,"** he said. **"I can't sing 'With God on My Side' for 15 years. What I write is much more concise now than before. It's not deceiving."**

When Mr. Dylan first appeared in New York he was strongly under the influence of Woody Guthrie, the Oklahoma ballad-maker. By the spring of 1963, with the popularity of his antidiscrimination protest, "Blowin' in the Wind," he became nationally known. His "Times They Are a' Changin'" was considered a credo for the discontented protesting collegians, for whom he became a spokesman.

Personal Expression

About a year ago he veered toward more personal expression with "Mr. Tambourine Man," a current hit. Last spring, he introduced "folk rock" with "Subterranean Homesick Blues", and the currently popular "Like a Rolling Stone."

Some of Mr. Dylan's lyrics are obviously "camp" fantasies, while others are poetically profound. Many are sufficiently; elliptical to spur squadrons of interpreters.

Mr. Dylan refused to explain this avant-garde direction. **"I have no idea what I'll be doing at Forest Hills Saturday,"** he said. **"I'll have some electricity** [electrically amplified instruments] **and a new song or a couple of three or four new songs. Time goes by very fast; up there onstage. I think of what not to do rather than what to do."**

4 September 1965
Hollywood Press Conference, Hollywood, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 993-994.

This article by Tracy Thomas appeared in the *New Musical Express* of February 11, 1966. Whilst not wholly evident, it would seem that the following relates to the so-called Hollywood Press Conference of September 4th, 1965 which took place in a bungalow at the Beverley Hills Hotel in Los Angeles on the day following the Hollywood Bowl concert. According to Heylin (*Stolen Moments*) – Dylan arrives with Dave Crosby, a Columbia executive and a 'barefoot girl'. The conference lasts about an hour, Dylan again playing his 'word-games' – much to the bemusement of most of the journalists there.

'SILENT DYLAN TALKS AFTER ALL'
NME's TRACY THOMAS at a Hollywood Press reception

BRIGITTE BARDOT, Robert Goulet and Phil Spector. What have these three famous celebrities in common? All played a part in one of Bob Dylan's infrequent Press conferences in Hollywood recently!

The shapely French actress's name arose in the question: "Didn't you dedicate your first song to her?" Tousled-haired, sleepy-eyed, faint-voiced Dylan agreed and proceeded to crack up the hardened reporters with his answer to the follow-up: "Why?" **"Why? Come on, you can see? Why! Think it out for yourself!"**

Though a local television commentator tried his best to make today's king of folk n' roll say that Barry McGuire is a protest singer, Dylan did not succumb, insisting that McGuire is a mixture of country-and-western and modern-day minstrel.

"I think a protest singer is one who sings against his will like Robert Goulet or Eydie Gorme."

Spector proved to be one of his favorite A&R men, though he admitted: **"I've only heard of a few."**

Meanwhile another reporter attempted to force the undernourished-looking singer into confessing that he and many other performers use drugs. But to no avail.

"I wouldn't know one if I saw one. Why, do you use 'em?" he cracked with a smile

Most of the press obviously expected obscure wisecracks from a sullen, sarcastic, rebellious youth. Instead, Dylan began the conference with mumbled, incoherent answers, but soon warmed to his audience, laughing and joking, but giving wild answers to poor or obvious questions, in excellent dead-pan fashion.

Perhaps the best example was his comments about movie plans. Speaking out of the top of his head an innocent Dylan elaborated: **"Yes, we're making one. I'll play my mother in it. I guess we'll call it *Mother Revisited*. I'm quite excited about it."** This last bit was dragged out in a lazy, completely bored tone.

And again, when quizzed on why he was in California, folk music's boy-wonder replied in a manner rivaling the famous Liverpool straight-faced send-uppers: **"To find some donkeys.**

We're shooting this film about the life of Christ back in New York and we need several donkeys. Also I'm doing a few concerts."

His serious and thoughtful side came to the fore when discussing his followers. **"I was amazed when I heard a taped interview with a 15-year-old girl, who was waiting to get into one of my concerts. She said how she digs William Blake and a bunch of others that no one else has read.**

"She was really hip and more free in mind than most of these 22-year-old college kids."

About letters from fans – **"Some of them actually understand. I like to read them."**

Politics and political singers crept into the questioning, but Dylan adamantly denied any political connections. **"I'm too busy for that. It's fine for those who want to mix the two fields, but it's not for me."**

However, he couldn't let the subject pass without a laugh. When asked about his participation in anti-Vietnam movements, be protested: **"I don't participate in anything. I defy you to name one thing I participated in. Name one!"**

The conference ended with the all in-black-clad Dylan remaining in his seat several minutes to oblige the photographers. With a wave and a smile, one of the most influential and controversial musical figures of our time concluded a rare 45 minutes of answering a wide assortment of questions, leaving the impression that, if not the boy-genius-next-door, he is at least a lot more human than we're led to believe.

24 September 1965
Austin Press Conference, Austin, Texas

Source: The Fiddler Now Upspoke, pp. 801-802.

This following was taken initially from Pickering's *Bob Dylan Approximately: A Portrait of the Jewish Poet in Search of God*. It was then compared with the version in McGregor's *Bob Dylan: The Early Years – A Retrospective*. Both versions are basically identical. Pickering and McGregor regard this session as an interview with an unnamed journalist with no record of where the article was published. Pickering gives a date of September 22nd whilst McGregor does not provide a date. If this session took place in Austin then it must have been either September 23rd or 24th. In *Stolen Moments*, Heylin states that Dylan held a press conference prior to his Austin concert and this seems to be where the following was taken from. Heylin's assertion that the following represents a transcript of a 'lost' Austin press conference appeared earlier in his *More Rain Unravelled Tales*.

The Austin show was, incidentally, the first concert where Dylan was backed by Levon and The Hawks.

JJ= Journalist or journalists.

JJ: What do you consider yourself? How do you classify yourself?

BD: Well, I like to think of myself in terms of a trapeze artist.

JJ: Speaking of trapeze artists, I've noticed in some of your recent albums a carnival-type sound. Could you tell me a little about that?

BD: That isn't a carnival sound, that's religious. That's very real; you can see that anywhere.

JJ: What about *Ballad Of A Thin Man*? This sounds as though it might have been dedicated to a newspaper reporter or something.

BD: No, it's just about a fellow that came into a truck-stop once.

JJ: Have the Beatles had any influence on your work?

BD: Well, they haven't influenced the songs or sound. I don't know what other kind of influence they might have. They haven't influenced the songs or the sound.

JJ: In an article in the *New Yorker*, written by Nat Hentoff, I believe, you said you sang what you felt and you sang to make yourself feel good, more or less. And it was implied that in your first two albums you sang "finger-pointing songs", I believe.

BD: Well, what he was saying was, I mean, I wasn't playing then and it was still sort of a small nucleus at that time and by the definition of why do you sing, I sing for the people. He was saying, "Why do you sing?", and I couldn't think of an answer except that I felt like singing. That's about all.

JJ: Why is it different?

BD: Come on, come on.

JJ: What is your attitude toward your "finger-pointing" songs? He implied that you thought they were just superficial.

BD: No, it's not superficial, it's just motivated. Motivated: uncontrollable motivation. Which anyone can do, once they get uncontrollably motivated.

JJ: You said before that you sang because you had to. Why do you sing now?

BD: Because I have to.

JJ: Your voice in here is soft and gentle. Yet in some of your records, there's a harsh twang.

BD: I just got up.

JJ: Could you give me some sort of evaluation as far as your own taste is concerned, comparing some of the things you like, old music, say, *Girl From The North Country*,

which I consider a very beautiful type ballad? Perhaps some of the things that have come out in the last couple of albums – do you get the same satisfaction out of doing this?

BD: Yeah, I do, I wish I could write like *Girl From The North Country*. You know, I can't write like that any more.

JJ: Why is that?

BD: I don't know.

JJ: Are you trying to accomplish anything?

BD: Am I trying to accomplish anything?

JJ: Are you trying to change the world or anything?

BD: Am I trying to change the world? Is that your question?

JJ: Well, do you have any idealism or anything?

BD: Am I trying to change the idealism of the world or anything? Is that it?

JJ: Well, are you trying to push over idealism to the people?

BD: Well, what do you think my ideas are?

JJ: Well, I don't exactly know. But are you singing just to be singing?

BD: No, I'm not just singing to be singing. There's a much deeper reason for it than that.

JJ: In a lot of the songs you sing you seem to express a pessimistic attitude toward life. It seems that *Hollis Brown* gives me that feeling. Is this your true feeling or are you just trying to shock people?

BD: That's not pessimistic form, that's just statement. You know, it's not pessimistic.

JJ: Who are your favorite performers? I don't mean folk, I mean general.

BD: Rasputin. Hm-m-m... Charles de Gaulle. The Staple Singers. I sort of have a general attitude about that. I like just about everybody everybody else likes.

JJ: You said just a minute ago you were preparing to go to classical music. Could you tell me a little about that?

BD: Well, I was going to be in the classical music field, and I imagine it's going right along. I'll get there one of these records.

JJ: Are you using the word classical perhaps a little differently than we are?

BD: A little bit, maybe. Just a hair.

JJ: Could you explain that?

BD: Well, I'm using it in the general sense of the word, thumbing a hair out.

JJ: Any attention to form?

BD: Form and matter. Mathematics?

JJ: What is your belief in God? Are you a Christian?

BD: Well, first of all, God is a woman. We all know that. Well, you take it from there.

October to Early November 1965
Mary Merrifield Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 587-588.

A brief interview conducted by Mary Merrifield (MM) for the Chicago Tribune in which it appeared on November 21st 1965 under the heading "Young People Here And Abroad Are Listening To What Bob Dylan Says". Heylin (Stolen Moments) dates this interview as occurring October to early November 1965 but cautions that "it is possible that this interview dates from considerably earlier given it's content".
A tape of the interview is supposedly in existence, but I have not been able to locate one.

Students, young rebels, and a new crop of message singers are imitating America's Bob Dylan in Paris and throughout England with lyrics not nearly so meaningful as his, but with an enthusiasm that has been growing slowly since Dylan's first album of folk songs in late 1960. On my recent trip to Europe, I heard Dylan's name mentioned in every youth group I interviewed, and I also read discussions of his work in the newspapers overseas. In this exclusive, taped interview with 24-year-old Dylan, I think that Dylan's message will be understood by youth and that parents will find clues to the younger generation's thinking.

MM: In one part of your song, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, you talk of adults not understanding young people today. Why?

BD: I can't really say that adults don't understand young people anymore than you can say big fishes don't understand little fishes. I didn't mean it as a statement, truth, or anything like that. It's a feeling – you know – just a feeling.

MM: Your lyrics always have substance, an idea, as well as imagery. Have you always been writing?

BD: Yes, for a long, long time. But I really can't talk about what I do. You know, as a third person. I find it very hard and get all twisted up about it and say what isn't really right. I really don't have any idea why I even write these things, you know.

MM: Are you more interested in youth or ideas?

BD: I'm interested in what's happening. I'm interested in what's really happening. And I know there are no answers. If a question can't be answered by a question then I know it really can't be answered. You know, if it can't be answered by just asking it, then I would think that it's not a valid question... .

MM: But you feel involved with people.

BD: People, yeah. I get involved when I see people. I can't fight any people. When people, individual people, fight, they're fighting for such phony reasons most of the time – all the time you could really say, I guess. You take the guy that has to work at the gas station eight hours a day, while the world is going on. Probably he is going to blow up some time, you know. I don't want to fight him. I've got no quarrel with him. you know. I'd just as soon make him laugh. I'd just as soon be with him, talk with him about his gas station, you know, this sort of thing. But then I've got to go. I can't stay at a gas station – and you know, he's got to stay there.

MM: Do you think your songs may be a vent for him and thru your songs he can identify with the blues of others?

BD: I don't know. All I know is that I can get along with him. I can get along with him only because I dig him. I've got nothing against him. I've got no prejudice against him. I haven't read any books about him. I haven't seen any movies about him. When I see him or meet him, you know, I can just be with him, talk to him.

MM: Is there anybody you can't get along with?

BD: No – no, there really isn't. The people I can't get along with can't get along with me - not because of me, for I want to get along with them. It's because they're so in knots. They're so tied up that it's actually impossible to them to be with me unless they're going to be untied. And to untie them, they'd have to lose all they have – and I wouldn't want that either. I'd just rather leave – myself. I would rather leave because I wouldn't be there to stay anyway.

MM: I heard a minister use verses from your *Blowin' In The Wind* for a baccalaureate address. He said you are doing more good than many ministers – that you are asking key questions. That you're awakening people's conscience.

BD: I feel I haven't any special message for any special people. I have none for really anybody unless they're ready to hear it. I feel sad when I think about people – you know, people who really are slaves to their jobs. I can't say, "Get on your feet and do something." I can't. I don't see how anybody can. You can't tell somebody's been living for 40, 50 years he's been living a lie, you know, so change. You can't do that. This has to be an understanding that you both know, and that's the best you can do-I think. And try to make the newborn better off, Without any hostility, you know.

MM: Do you think that there's sort of a new religion today?

BD: Yeah – well, maybe phoniness is going out of religion and that's good. There's the phoniness of 'go to church on Sunday and everything is cool.' You know, it's not right. The phoniness of telling somebody they're different from you because they're a different religion. That's not right. No matter which way it comes, a new religion could come in the church, in school, dime store. A lot of people were raised, you know, raised strictly in religious ways and they now have to have a certain amount of freedom, I would think, in their ideas. You know, not just think that they're right. There's a lot of different gods. You know, so long as somebody doesn't think that my god is the only god. As long as he doesn't think that 'I'm right. I'm right because my preacher told me I was right, ' then it's O.K., I would think. Why I've known old people – farmers – that just walk along in the fields and never go to church in their whole lives, and they're more religious than people who go to church and give to charities and everything.

MM: Are you saying you have faith in people?

BD: I have faith in the world, you know, in the world – anything that breathes. If it breathes, it's gotta be good. It's got to be righteous. It's gotta be alive – and I don't think it wants to be bowed down to.

Autumn 1965
Nat Hentoff (The Playboy) Interview
The Original Unpublished Version, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 319-358.

There are two versions of this interview, the original version which you'll find on tape and the published version which appeared in Playboy in March 1966. To call them versions ignores the fact that they are totally different interviews. The published version has been presented already in Volume 1 (pages 65-80) and background notes and general information can be found there. For starters, I've compared the 1984 Alan Williams transcript and the circulating tape. The Williams version is an extremely accurate account and it's formed the backbone of my transcript.

NH: For years, the conventional, intellectual position, as well as the so-called sophisticated position, has been that popular music in this country was declining because... things like rhythm and blues and rock n' roll and the like were mechanical and decadent and were the kind of thing that adults manufactured for the kids... that the kids didn't really have any say in it. What's your view about this? In other words, what is the kind of popular music that moves you? And where does it come from?

BD: That I just like to listen to?

NH: Yeah, listen to and also increasingly as... you know, in terms of what people call 'folk-rock', the way you're broadening your bases in a way.

BD: Well, whatever this 'folk-rock' is you know, I don't really listen to it that much, you know. I listen more in terms of... in terms of sound, which, you know, a few years ago, when there wasn't such a big folk or folk-rock or whatever have you, when there wasn't really hardly much of anything. When there wasn't people talking about music so much, just because there, you know, wasn't any kind of sound really. Whereas the sound could be, you know, transformed in a lot of things, a lot of ways you can get your sound. You can get your sound with words, you can get a sound with just plain, bare sound.

NH: What about rhythm and blues and rock? Well, rhythm and blues particularly? What do you find in it of value? In other words, it's been put down as...

BD: Well, I'm really no authority, you know. I just listen to it, that's about all. I don't listen to hard, straight rhythm and blues in terms of the Del Satins or the Emotions, those kind of people that recorded a long time ago... just the four chord thing. I mean, it's advanced pretty much farther than that now and that seems kinda... old... you know.

NH: Yeah.

BD: Now the rhythm and blues which would be much more contrived kind of chords, and different sounding things.

(Aside to studio technician (ST))

NH: You know I still don't think we're getting anything on it.

ST: Yes you are.

NH: Yeah?

ST: Wanna check it?

NH: Just for a...

ST: OK.

NH: Alright.

(And back to the interview.)

NH: Well, what about the people who still say, you know, that there aren't any good songs anymore, like Cole Porter or Jerome King, you know, and they...

BD: Well, they're, you know, they're just looking for that kind, er, that kind of music. They're probably right, you know. If they think, you know, there are no more good songs like the ones Cole Porter wrote and George Gershwin, I guess they are right, you know...

NH: But what is the music that's popular now... and it's increasingly by people who come out of the rhythm and blues scene... what is that music saying to the younger generation? 'Cause I've never seen anything quite like the kind of response there's been...

BD: The music that's being played now?

NH: Yeah, you know...

BD: I really don't know. I really have no idea. I know one thing, that everybody around a cert... the certain age I'm at now... that's about twenty four... everybody around 24, 25, 26, 23, no matter what they were doing in the past, you know, years, I mean, I know, has been... was turned on to rock n' roll a long time ago, you know. I mean it's just... it's just something everybody's tried to hide for a long time, you know.

NH: Yeah.

BD: Uh...

NH: What was there in the rock n' roll that really moved people your age?

BD: Well, it was just that, you know... rock n' roll, or country and western music, which is just a total kind of feeling, which is not the same as, you know, watching TV, or being taught anything in school, or being... it was just a total other kind of form of sound, and which puts your head in a different place. It, you know... the reason it died out is because there was no way to make it any more.

NH: Mm.

BD: Like, you had to have friends to play it with you, you know. You had to have money to buy electricity. You had to, you know, to keep a band, which costs money and that's all very hard.

NH: Yeah. While it was going, do you think it's accurate to say the music – that kind of music -also had more emotion, more direct feeling, than most of the other which was around?

BD: Oh sure. Oh sure, it still does, you know. That's, you know... it still does. You just can't take that away from it, you know. That's why most people... you can just about pinpoint the people that don't like it. You can just about, usually, walk down the street and you see and know who wouldn't like it. I mean it's a... if they wouldn't like that, they wouldn't like the people that play it probably, you know, and it's got to do with more than just... it's got to do with a lot of things, really which overlap.

NH: You say you can pinpoint the people that don't like it... like how? You mean the way they walk, the way they hold themselves?

BD: Oh sure. The way they light a cigarette. You can tell...

NH: Yeah.

BD: ...what they're like.

NH: You mean inhibited, uh?

BD: Inhibited... really it's a whole other thing. Something which I don't think's ever gonna be brought across to anybody. I mean because deep down, you know, people either who... most people do like it. I mean, they have to like it. A lot of people are, you know... It just represents something that a lot of people don't want to even think about probably; that's why they raise such a commotion. But it... when you think about it really, it comes down to everybody just putting themselves on really. Because if they didn't like it, you know, they'd... the people that... they have to let their kids do something. We're speaking now of people who go to school and high school and buy all the records, you know.

NH: Mm.

BD: They have to let them do something because they really... don't really give them too much of anything else. So they let them buy records, you know. They don't really know what they're listening to, but now, I guess that they're finding out what they're listening to. You know, they could easily just extinguish the whole thing by cutting out their allowances. Then there'd be no more records out.

NH: When you say they're not given much of anything else, you mean, much of a feeling of, what do you call it? Interpersonal...

BD: Well, well, I mean, who treats... who treats their kids like they treat their friends? You know?

NH: Yeah, yeah, that say's it. Who are some of the people in the country and western, the rhythm and blues fields. I don't mean influences now, but people that you just enjoy listening to especially?

BD: Well, I don't like to listen to too much country and western people. I like to listen to some of their songs...

NH: Yeah.

BD: ...that they sing. But I get, oh, monotonized by listening to too many. I like Buck Owens' songs, he's alright. And Hank Williams and Joe Williams. There all the time, easily, you can make some sort of sound.

NH: Mm.

BD: But the other people are just the songs they sing. I think.

NH: How about in the rhythm and blues and rock n' roll fields? Who do you especially, you know... who strikes you especially?

BD: Oh, you mean just name a name?

NH: Sure, just, you know, if you're... almost like free association... if you're thinking in terms of just pleasure in listening, who would you think of?

BD: I'd listen to all the Motown records. I listen to Wilson Pickett. Otis Redding, I guess. Charlie Rich.

NH: Yeah. How about Chuck Berry who... seems to be rediscovered by a lot of people?

BD: Well, he's OK. I like Chuck Berry.

NH: This goes back to something you started to say before, and it's about the generation gap. I've seen it among some of the kids who work in SNCC and Students For Democratic Society, you know, where you can't trust anybody over thirty... uh...

BD: That's not really true. That's just a fallacy. I think that's the right word – fallacy.

NH: Yeah.

BD: You know, I mean, it's... it's ridiculous.

NH: How much of that gap, though, does exist? This feeling that the older generation just isn't with it?

BD: I don't know many of these people. I never really have. That was just a thing from the newspapers. Newspapers seemed to say that nobody liked anybody over thirty, and the people that read it believed it. But I don't know if that's true. I don't really... you know, I never said I don't wanna talk about anybody over thirty, 'cause I'm almost thirty myself.

NH: So you wouldn't go with the thesis that all adults are almost square by definition because they're... they are over a certain age?

BD: No, no I wouldn't... I don't... it doesn't matter... I have no prejudices on age.

NH: Yeah. Communication depends on two people, right? Essentially?

BD: Well. If you think there's such a thing as communication.

NH: Yeah. You were saying you're almost uh... well, you're about six years from thirty, are you at all concerned about somehow not becoming insulated rather? Being not as open as you are now, you know, if...

BD: No. I have no fears about that. No. You know, everything will still be the same. It's too late to change anything like that. But I'm certainly not gonna cop out, though, and become any kind of... schoolteacher. I mean, out in Vermont, you know, living in an old

cottage, teaching English once a week. Reading poetry to, uh, girls or something. I'm not gonna do anything like that.

NH: Yeah. So far as you look ahead, if you do, do you intend to pretty much stay in what you're doing now?

BD: Yeah. It'll be taken to some other degrees... making a movie some time – wanna do that. I've a book coming out but it just... I mean, It's very average to me, you know. I can't really be excited about it. I've worked on it kind of hard at certain times. But now it's all done... now it means very little.

NH: Is that the one that Macmillan's putting out?

BD: Yeah.

NH: What's it all about? Los Angeles, or...

BD: No. It's not about anything. It's just a... a book of, uh, words.

NH: What's the movie gonna be like?

BD: Well, the movie'll be like a song really. Uh, it's not gonna... there won't be any kind of "Well, this is the first movie, here, and we have to, uh, set an example for the rest of the movies". It's just gonna be like a song. It's gonna be a straight movie and, uh,. maybe a horror movie or something. Something very natural.

NH: Are you gonna write it?

BD: I'll write some of it, yeah.

NH: And who's gonna produce it, or put it together?

BD: That's not decided yet.

NH: Yeah. Um... once, when we were talking, you were saying that you have no particular feeling of support for groups like the NAACP, 'cause they're too middle class, too slow. What civil rights groups are you that interested in?

BD: I'm not really interested in any of them, to tell the truth. Uh... I used to know some of the people in SNCC, that's about 1960, you know, and I've lost all contact. Evidently there was something wrong someplace, or else, you know... I would've been president of SNCC right now.

NH: (Laughs).

BD: But, I don't know... I can't go along with all this. I mean, it's just a laughing matter, as anybody that's... you know, I mean, a lot of people take all that very seriously, like Leroi Jones... you know, this kind of stuff, but...

NH: Yeah.

BD: It's sort of... it's kinda funny, because, if you think about it, because even Leroi Jones is gonna die you know. I mean, whoever Leroi Jones is! I just saw him on television once.

NH: Oh yeah. So your feeling is that these social movements, or whatever tend to get kind of exaggerated in importance?

BD: Well, not exaggerated in importance. Of course people are starving, you know, people are... lot of people are in bad trouble. But, obviously, there you make your own choice, you know, and you go through with it. Or you don't fuck around, you know, in other peoples lives. You know. I've got my own life that... and I try my best to handle that, you know. To try to handle somebody else's life you really have to, you know, to be a very powerful person, you know.

NH: Yeah.

BD: You have to sort of have... well, you've got a lot of responsibility on your hands. And the more peoples lives you're, you know... you're responsible for, the bigger the weight is.

NH: Hm.

BD: Look at President Johnson. Look at him. He doesn't seem like a very normal fellow to me. And you can understand why.

NH: Not very normal in what ways?

BD: Well, you take a look at him. I mean, you can just see a picture of him and you can see that he's a little... uh... he's a little worried about something.

NH: Yeah. What about... well, like Joan, for example, has for a long time been involved in things like Vietnam and peace demonstrations and the like. Do you have any particular interest in that?

BD: Well, you know, it might sound very funny but... you know, like... I can only talk about it in terms of me, you know.

NH: Sure.

BD: It's like... It's like, if I was... if somebody told me right now, "You're gonna have to die in an hour" you know, there would really be nothing that I'd have to clean up, you know. No unfinished business, no, you know... I could very easily accept it. I mean, that would be the way it's gonna be, you know. Like it's... I don't really know... you know... like who's gonna be better for all the... I mean, I don't know how long these people wanna live, you know. I don't know if they're looking for eternity, or looking to be moralised, or, you know, whatever have you, or why they do these things, you know. I mean, I...

NH: People who get involved in the peace things, you mean?

BD: Well no, not those especially. I'm talking about people that aren't really... not really completely straight, you know. People that are afraid of something, but act as if maybe they're not. And, uh... you know, I think that's fine, that there are peace demonstrations and all this kind of thing, you know. It's just a little more complicated in my mind. I know what it is in a feeling, but in order to put that feeling into words, I really can't do it too good. And if I'd even attempt it, I know it wouldn't come out the right way, and I...

NH: Yes.

BD: And then, all in all, I know if... even if I did, it wouldn't matter anyway to anybody, because... so that it... I mean, I think what Joan Baez is doing is just marvelous. But, uh...

NH: It's not your way.

BD: It's just not... it's just... I mean, I think that's just wonderful, but, you know... if there's... if she ever needed my help for anything, God willing, I wish she'd come and ask. But...

NH: But you're not going to go out looking for demonstrations or things like that.

BD: No, I've done most of that, you know. I went through that too. And, uh... it, you know, it definitely has to be done.

NH: Yeah.

BD: But, uh, y'know, everybody talks about... you know, I mean, just the names that strike familiar chords, you know, like Jesus Christ, you know... like with all the good He did, you could say. But what good, where, you know, for who, or how, or when, you know. And then, look what they did to Him. (Inaudible) **And everybody's talking about Him, y'know. But how does anybody know the way He really felt, you know? It certainly has been such a long time ago that I think it's just about impossible to even find out anything about Him. It's just been so... you know, people have written so much that... I don't know. You just have to believe, you know.**

NH: Yeah.

BD: That's a dangerous business there, just believing. 'Cause there you're sacrificing a whole lot.

NH: So that for you, the thing is to live your own life as best you can and stay as straight as you can?

BD: Yeah, stay, you know, just, uh, I guess so, in terms of just words, you know, just... just words. But it's like, one time I wanted to write a novel, you know, and so I was putting a lot of time in. It must have been about six months, off and on. Trying to put this novel together, but I knew, you know... and finally I just come to the conclusion, like: OK, you know, so I got this novel put together. You know, like – is this gonna be the novel, the statement, you know? Is this my message? My thing? And no matter how many... I had about a thousand, you know, not a thousand, about five hundred pages of it. I said:

No, you know, of course not. That's bullshit. You know. This is nothing. If I finish this novel, I'm just gonna have to write another one. If I finish this novel, it's not gonna come out until at least a year and a half to two years, before, you know... before, you know... now. It's gonna be a completely different thing by the time it does come out, and by the time it does come out everybody's gonna say how great it is, or else they're gonna put it down. Meantime, I'm not even gonna be there anymore. And I'm gonna... it won't even be me that wrote that novel. And from then on I have to live up to that novel, you know, and to be writing another novel. People are gonna ask me what I'm doing... I'm gonna have to say I'm writing another novel. You know. It's like... it's just that... and when you even get it done, all it does is that it helps you to get to parties. You go to more parties and, you know, sign autographs and give away free copies of the book; and, you know, you can have a ball for a couple of weeks. But I went through all that with records, you know, and things, and it's not the same thing. Every time I write a song, it's like writing a novel. Just takes me a lot less time, you know and I can get it down, you know... down to where, you know, I can reread it in my head a lot. And believe me, you know, they're not... the songs that I've written are just not... you know, that's what they are to me, 'cause, you know, I can't stand on any of them, I mean, like. They're just, uh, songs.

NH: You don't feel then as if you have to compete with yourself every time you write another one?

BD: No, no. I don't. I somewhat... Do, in a very funny way. But I don't really, once I can get in the movement of what I wanna do. If the music comes very natural. But, uh, it's not really a competition thing.

NH: Getting back for a minute to the opposite of Joan, a lot of the things you hear now from, let's say, from the American Legion with Johnson is – how come these kids don't realize that they'd be, how does it go, they'd... do they... are they saying they'd rather be red than dead? Or d'you know that? How that little thing goes? How do you feel about that kind of slogan?

BD: Rather be red than dead?

NH: Yeah. In other words, you've got like this so-called...

BD: I don't really go for slogans in any kind of way, but, you know, I mean, I'm sure... you say that's a slogan there. I'm sure there's another slogan that says I'd rather be dead than red, which I wouldn't go for that slogan either, you know. Slogans are just, you know, a misusage of time really, 'cause there's nobody gonna help out the world any, you know. There just is nobody. I mean, you know, you just take a look out on the street, if you think things change. And you can open up that curtain, this whole room would be different, you know. There's too many people, you know... that, uh, have things to do.

NH: Are you ever bothered by things like the Dominican Republic and Vietnam, in the sense that the whole thing may blow up?

BD: Yeah, well, I'm sure it might, you know, but it's gonna happen probably, you know, and when it happens, the most I can say is that it wasn't me.. But that's, you know, that's about all, I mean, I don't want... I certainly don't want to be walking around in any kind of, you know, any kind of nuclear thing. Or any kind of, like, growing six inches on my elbow, uh, you know... magnetized a thousand times and, you know, six legs and anything like that. Man, I don't want to be caught in that position. I would have to get somebody to... I would have to have a good friend along, you know, to get me out of that. But, uh... I don't know.

NH: Let me try a fantasy for a minute. Suppose you were, somehow, in a position like Johnson and you had a deal with, let's say, the Chinese communists. What would you do?

BD: Well, first of all, I can only talk in terms of "if". I mean, I'll answer your question just as if it's like a fantasy, but...

NH: Yeah.

BD: But I'm not gonna... I'm not gonna think that, you know, first of all... you mean, if I was President Johnson right now?

NH: Uh, let's say if you were President.

BD: If I was President?

NH: Yeah.

BD: Well, let's see. If I was President, first thing I'd do, I'd have all my friends in the White House, right away. I'd completely revise the whole White House so everybody that works there would just look a whole other way... everybody would just have to wear high-collared shirts. There would have to be a section where everybody wore flowers on their tie. And there... there would be a whole different set of heroes right away.

NH: Like who?

BD: Well, like... I think... instead of talking with Martin Luther King about anything I would have to talk to, uh, Roebuck Staples, you know, who would be a spokesman for the, uh, you know... for that. And have all, you know... just all... the whole place just redecorated completely, with swings and, uh, teeter totters...

NH: Yeah

BD: And for the first week we'd just have a party to get straight, you know. And there would... I'd probably send for Mao, tell him to come over and see what we were like.

NH: What else would you do, like in foreign policy?

BD: Foreign policy?

NH: Mm. So you figure then, like, that if he saw what we were like, then things could be a little less dissonant?

BD: Mm. I don't know, you know. I don't even know what he's like to begin with. I would... well, you know, you see those pictures of all those guests, all the chicks are carrying guns and uh... you know, I know, that he probably likes his women to be tough, you know. Urn. He would probably come over here and be flabbergasted, you know. Have to have some tough women waiting for him, you know, in the lobbies. I'd fix it up nice for him, you know, if he came over, no doubt about that.

NH: What did you think of the Free Speech Movement and all that, at the University of California, and the way that sort of thing is spreading to a lot of other colleges? Is that a good sign? Or does it mean anything?

BD: Well, it's college, you know. It's... that's nice, you know, that really is very nice... that they do that at college. Uh, but it's... well, what exactly does it do, though? I mean, for other people that don't go to college?

NH: Mm.

BD: You know, I think it's tremendous that they would have enough courage to do what they did. But I, you know, I don't really know too much about it. I have all those things that they're... I can't possibly imagine anybody, you know, wanting what they were wanting, that's all.

NH: What do you mean?

BD: Well, I guess they were wanting to picket, or wanting to have free speech.

NH: Yeah.

BD: Well, I have free speech, you know... I... I don't have those problems that they have, you know, like, they've... I don't have... I don't really have to put up with any teachers, you know, or I don't have to have any degree. I don't have to take any tests. I don't have to sort any kind of philosophies out in my mind. I don't have to memorize anything, you know. I don't have, you know, to look like the next person. I don't have to, uh... I just don't have these problems. I don't have...

NH: You don't have to join a Free Speech movement.

BD: Well I don't really have anybody that's supporting me, you know... so I don't have to rebel against this, you know?

NH: Do you ever have any... uh, not regrets, but, let's say curiosity about college, about going yourself?

BD: That would be silly, wouldn't it? I have no regrets about it... I've played at some, you know, but I didn't really get out to see too much of... y'know, it's a nice place to be. Their colleges are really nice, you know, they're certainly a lot quieter than the city. The ones out in the country are fantastic... just like, you know, like old-age homes... you know, they're nice. I would like to go to one, just to relax once in a while, you know, but... just to sit on the banks of some river, most of them are on rivers, you know. Just do that. But I can't imagine going to any classes, or reading any books that they would give me. I imagine I'd start up a few friendships with some of the people around, but that's, you know...

NH: You just pick up on what interests you in terms of books or anything else, I take it?

BD: Yeah, yeah, I do. I don't really read that much, and when I do read anything, it must be small. But I don't know... I go see movies once in a while, I guess... stuff like that.

NH: I remember you're reluctant to give advice to anybody else, but do you think some of the people either in college or about to go might think awhile about whether they ought to go? You know, judg... looking at yourself, for example, not as a model, but as...

BD: Well, things were different, you know, when I didn't go to college, you know. Things really were much different then than they are now, you know, like. Then... there was a group of people, sort of, that were just bumming around the country, you know, and I was one of them, you know. But things are... seemed to be different than they are now. Like, I can't imagine, you know, bumming around the country now with any of those people that are bumming around the country now, like...

NH: What's the difference?

BD: Well, see, in those... back then, to make it, you know, was just out of the question, you know. It was more or less a thing of, you know, from here to there, and that's what it was. It was groovy, you know. And it seemed a lot of people were groovy then. But now you can still see people that are still doing it, and they're just totally whacked out. Like, they're still there, they're doing it, but they're all... twisted up and they don't wanna... get the feeling they don't wanna do it any more. And even the... well, you know, you can take that whole... the Beat generation thing. I just read a little bit of that kind of stuff and... you know, like, what stuff really was there, except for Allen Ginsberg, you know. Or, you know... that's just about all I can think about. I can't really think of any of these other people that did their thing. I mean that...

NH: You mean, the ones who are doing it now, don't even get any... don't seem to get any kicks out of it.

BD: Well it is a kick, you know.

NH: Yeah.

BD: Like, you do it... you do things for a kick, you know. That's why you really do things. You do things for a kick. I mean, you don't wanna do anything you don't wanna do, you know. The hang-up comes in, is when, most people, they get involved in something, they get detached, you know, and sooner or later they come to the conclusion that they're not getting any kicks any more, and then they see other people getting kicks. Well that's fine, you know, like that, I guess, just happens. But the problem comes in, is when you wanna stop other people from getting kicks, you know, just because, you know, it hangs you up, you know. Like, it drives you farther into suicide, you know. But I can, you know... I don't get too many kicks anymore nowadays, you know, once in a while I do. But I certainly don't wanna stop anybody else from getting 'em.

NH: That's like...

Break in recording

BD: It's funny to hear these people talking "The next thing's gonna be country rock, you know."

NH: Yeah.

BD: Country rock was Elvis Presley. Just tired Elvis Presley, you know. I mean, how can you say the next big thing's gonna be country rock? You listen to Elvis Presley's first records. I mean, if you have a better name for them, you know... there isn't a better name. All this has been done before. It's just, you know, like another... another time going over, only with different times.

NH: Yeah. Did you like those first Presley records when you came out?

BD: Oh sure. We liked those, yeah. I just didn't like them any more after *Teddy Bear* and stuff like that.

NH: Yeah.

BD: But I got all his early records. All... all of 'em.

NH: You were saying that you don't get as many kicks now as you used to. Why is that, do you figure? The fame, or what?

BD: Well, the kicks, you know... like, uh... I've done everything that I really wanna do, you know. Like now, I mean, 'cause I don't get any kick out of... you know, like the first time, you say, I was in Rome, I saw... I was standing there and digging that, you know, whaddya call it? Big stadium...

NH: Coliseum.

BD: ...Coliseum, yeah, you know, it was a kick, you know. Just being... just the whole thing, you know. The whole feeling of being around there and whatever happened, whatever else happened. The second time I was there, you know, it just distracted me, you know. Like this Coliseum and how beautiful it was – it was distracting, you know. I can... and then something else – Portugal, man. All this beauty. It was just very distracting, you know. It just, uh...

NH: Do you ever get tired of Big Sur? Do you find that distracting?

BD: I never spent that much time out there, but I did find it a little distracting, yes.

NH: Yeah. Well. You were saying you've done just about everything you wanted to, and yet you're twenty four. What have you got to look forward to?

BD: Well, I don't know. I'd... think about it. I might start me a bubble gum factory or something. Different kinds of cartoons inside, you know.

NH: So you haven't... you haven't lost the expectation that there may be more kicks ahead?

BD: Oh no, nothing like that. Well, it's like... it's not like I can go any place now, you know and something is usually bound to happen. You know, you take your chances, you know. But now I can't really go any place, you know. And even now, when I go any place, it's not where, you know... it's more of a chance anything's gonna happen, because it's a little different now. It's, you know, sort of like "strike and split", you know. It's, uh...

NH: Yeah.

BD: It's a whole different thing. I know... I can see through most of the people, you know, that... and it's just... it's not any fun, you know... and, like, it's more fun just stopping at a red light and watching the people walk by, you know. That's really a lot of fun!

NH: In the sense that, what, that they might see you...? Or...

BD: Well, it's like there's a kick, like, I would think in terms of kicks, you know, just getting on a Greyhound bus for three days, but, you know, and going some place.

NH: Can you do that now?

BD: I can't do that any more, you know. It's up to, you know... get the Greyhound bus to come to me. But, uh... I have to hire the bus, you know, and stuff like that. It's ridiculous. But, I mean, it's not really... I'm not complaining or down about it. It's just a thing, that's all. It's gotta happen to somebody, I guess.

NH: Yeah. We were talking about college and I wonder, this isn't quite fantasy because, well... suppose, not that you were in charge of a school, but if somebody were to ask you

what should a school be and do so that kids don't get all tied up and uptight the way they often do when...

BD: Well it shouldn't really be that way. Like.. like school... if someone wants to be a doctor, you know, they gotta go to school, you know, I mean, obviously they gotta go to school and they've gotta learn how to do all these things to be a doctor. But I wouldn't send anybody I knew – tell 'em to go to school, man, unless they wanted to be a doctor. I mean, I don't care what they wanna be, but if you wanna be a doctor, you know, gonna be something like that, you know, lawyer or, you know something like, you know... something really hard, you know – tell 'em to go, you know, do it, you know. But if you're gonna do it, you know, do it. But the other thing, just going to school reading and writing and taking tests, I guess, you know, and learning, you know, why things happen, it's just ridiculous in the face of things that are going to happen whether you know why they happen or not.

NH: So what should you be doing during these years if you're not gonna be a doctor or something, you know, specialized?

BD: Well you should be... it's not what you should be doing. It's... you could do anything you wanna do, you know. You could hang out in Mexico for four years. Man, you know, and uh, it's... you should know about a lot of things though, which you don't know, which people keep you away from until you get to be a certain age.

NH: Like, for example?

BD: Like, for example, everything, you know, just about anything you can imagine. It's not gonna... if you do any things that are... like that, like as if they're gonna kill you, too many habits and things and... they're not gonna kill you at all. They might shake you up, but they're not gonna kill you...

NH: Do you mean sex or pot or...?

BD: Like, anything, absolutely anything, you know... uh, doing handstands. It's... you, know, I don't know, it's... when you come to think of it, when a person even goes to college – and I remember, I got out of high school I didn't think about it then but I think about it now – what I did I really know? When I got out of high school, I mean, what did the school teach me?

NH: Yeah.

BD: And I can truthfully say, you know, that I haven't used any of that stuff which I've learned in twelve years, except, you know, adding, maybe and reading and writing and how to, you know... and that's all though, you know, like. The rest of it, it just seems to be a thing to take up your time, you know, which, you know, has gotta be. I mean, it can't be any other way, because nobody's gonna come around and say "okay, we're gonna... our courses are gonna be much harder now, and everybody's gonna graduate by the time they're nine," you know, "and then, if you're ready, you can go to college." Which could easily be done.

NH: Yeah.

BD: Because all you'd have to do is teach somebody how to read and write, and you put them in college. Teach them a little math and that's really all you have to teach them, really. Who cares, you know, who the first President of the United States was and who cares where Africa is in terms of...

NH: You can always look it up.

BD: Right. You can carry an encyclopedia around. But I wouldn't want that to happen to anybody. I mean most people can't really afford to have their kids be total outcasts, you know, so they wouldn't do that, you know. Most people, I guess, would want their kids to be, you know, with other kids and normal and having a good time and birthday parties and...

NH: Yeah.

BD: ...stuff like that. Well, that's all fine too.

NH: How would you raise your kid?

BD: How would I?

NH: Yeah.

BD: I have no idea. I certainly wouldn't hide anything from them or anything like that. I mean a kid w... would... couldn't open his eyes anyway until about five years old – five or six years old. I wouldn't imagine I'd even be around by that time, so... so I wouldn't have that problem.

NH: Why do you think you wouldn't be around by that time?

BD: Well, obviously, it could happen, you know. I mean I'm not counting on being around, but...

NH: You just don't look ahead that far anyway?

BD: I can't look ahead that far, no. That's...

NH: This has interested me. You're... you got out of that locked step, the whole question, career thing, and as a result you're a lot freer in many ways than a lot of people. What was it in your background, in how you grew up, that let you do that? 'Cause you started, I guess like everybody else.

BD: Well, where I come from it's different than around here, you know. It's... you can be just about anything you want, you know. It's more or less... there's no distinguishing... there's no lines of you know, poverty. Like, everybody's more or less the same. All the towns are, you know... it's just a whole other thing, you know. It's not... you didn't really have that much, you know, I mean...

NH: Nobody had that much?

BD: No. No.

NH: But still, most of the people, the kids you were growing up with, I'm sure, went...

BD: Well, a lot of... oh sure, sure... I just was... I just... I don't know. I have no idea. My uncle was a professional gambler. I'd see him once in a while. Maybe that had something to do with it. I don't know.

NH: Yeah.

BD: I don't know really what it was that I, you know... there were a lot of people – I'm not the only one that left there and traveled around like me. There was people that... everybody left there. I don't know really of anybody that stayed there. There's nothing really there. Everybody my age I know left. I don't know where they are. Once in a while I hear from people, but I don't... I know that there's nobody... nobody stayed there to, uh, you know...

NH: So, in a sense there was an advantage in the way it was, 'cause it sort of got you to leave.

BD: Oh, from my very first time of consciousness I know I wanted to get out of there. 'Cause really... you know... everybody did.

NH: Well, you first hit the road when you were quite young. What was it, about 12?

BD: Well, I was just running away, but that's just a... a thing because... it doesn't mean too much here because it's not like hitting the road from...

NH: Yeah.

BD: ...New York for the west coast or anything like that. The towns are only ten miles apart, you know, and there are thousands of them so you can't really get too lost. It's, It's just a... just a... a thing, you know. It's running away; everybody runs away from home.

NH: But then... as I remember, you went farther distances, went over abroad.

BD: Yeah, yeah. But everybody else did it. It wasn't my own idea. It was a common thing to do. I think everybody ran away at least once or twice in their lifetimes, you know. It's ... I mean, I remember that, very simply, everybody did it, you know.

NH: Was there anything that you learned just in the process of doing that? You know, not only the traveling but in doing it and having the courage to do it, that, uh...

BD: It didn't really take much courage, it just took a "Ugh" feeling, that... "I must get some kicks." That's about all it was. You could actually hop trains where I come from. There were freight trains, box cars, ore trains. You could actually hop them and go for a ride, you know. I've done that.

NH: So it was a kind of a mobile existence to start with.

BD: Yeah. Well, I mean, if you knew where... what a part of the country it is... it's, there's nothing there, you know. I mean, it's not such a great thing, it really isn't. I mean, if I was here in New York City I probably wouldn't have done that. I probably would have turned out completely different. It's...

NH: Gone to Bronx High School Assize?

BD: Sure. I would've probably been a lawyer by now if I'd have stuck to the... if I would have been more lucky, to be born here. But really, you know, it's nothing special...

NH: You once said that you didn't want to work too often – you'd rather have most of your life and time to yourself. It seems... in the last year, haven't the tours been increasing and that kind of thing?

BD: Yeah. Yeah. They have. I'm working now a lot, because, uh, I dig it now moreso... It's a different thing now. I was gonna quit. When I was playing all by myself, I was gonna play... I was very mixed-up on how long I was gonna really do it, play by myself... uh... it's another thing altogether. I would never want to do it again. It's... really it's a whole other thing. It's not... it's a... see what it comes down to is that, uh... I've written a lot of songs, you know, and the thing about writing them and recording them, that's one thing. But to get up on stage and sing' em...

NH: Mm.

BD: ...night after night, gets a little hard. Because you're not really there in your right, you know, mind half the time. And to get up there and sing all these songs, which are...

NH: What do you mean by not being in your right mind?

BD: Well, just being in a... in a mind that's, uh... it is for people... put it this way, like, people come to the concert, they're all ready to see the concert. But, like you're not really ready to see them.

NH: Yeah, yeah. I dig.

BD: You know, it's, uh... you know, you can translate that into terms of, you know, somebody coming along and ringing your doorbell you don't wanna see; it just happens, this night that 3,000 people are ringing your doorbell.

NH: Yes. So you travel with a group now all the time?

BD: Yeah.

NH: What's the name of it?

BD: Well they're from... they're... we call 'em Levon and the Hawks.

NH: How do you spell the Levon?

BD: L-E-V-O-N.

NH: Yeah.

BD: Levon, he's from Arkansas. He's the drummer and, uh, he is... Robbie, Robbie's the lead guitar player. I've... Rob... I've known Robbie for some time. Uh, what that comes down to is just that you, you know, can't really get people to play with unless you can pay 'em...

NH: Yeah.

BD: And I wouldn't wanna cheat anybody and promise them anything, now, it doesn't cost anybody anything. I mean, it'd be foolish not to, you know, pay them, not to play with them, no...

NH: So that's one of the reasons you're working more now, huh?

BD: Yeah, it is. Also, I know what's happening is, not totally... it is... see, before I used to go to concerts, I used to play these concerts. I used to say "Well, would I come to see me tonight?" And I used to have to be very truthful and say "No, I wouldn't come." And I'd rather... I'd rather do something else. I really would.

NH: Mm.

BD: But that was just me, you know.

NH: Now, the way...

BD: But now I... I wanna... I would think, "Well, would I want to come to hear this tonight?" and I've gotta say I would.

NH: You mean having them with you increases your own enjoyment in performing?

BD: Well no, not really. It's another thing too. It's, uh... it's... you know, the songs are all uh... they don't have any influences you see. I mean, I know this to be true. That the songs, most of them, and, you know, it's all of them really put on the stage now, uh... is that, what they are in being, like is not influenced by... it's not... it's not a trying to be something else kind of thing. Whereas a lot of stuff is. Like, you can listen to a lot of records and things, or go and see a lot of shows, and it wouldn't really matter who was doing it, you know?

NH: Yeah.

BD: It would... you know, you could easily find the same thing down the block. Which is alright, you know. I don't say I'm putting down that stuff, you know, or anything, 'cause it's all very good. But I know, what we're doing is different. I don't know what exactly it is that we're doing... I know that it's different though. It's not folk-rock or this kind of thing. It's... if you wanna define it as that, it's... that's alright too, it doesn't matter. But I'd listen to it. I actually dig it, you know.

NH: Where would you say, beside not talking influences, but what are some of it's roots? Like negro blues and country music, and...

BD: Well, the roots are hard – a little bit harder to define than that. It's not, uh... it's everything really that, you know... it's just that, uh... I don't know. I can easily look at the others. Lot of first songs there were, like *Hey Woody Guthrie, I Wrote You A Song* was definitely influenced by Woody Guthrie. Uh, you know... *Highway 51* on that first record was definitely influenced by Everly Brothers and, uh, you know, Charlie Pickett. On the second record you can still see the influences, you know, of stuff like that. Like, uh, the first record, there was Muddy Waters influence on it...

NH: But now there aren't any influences really.

BD: No, the influence is all sort of mashed up, you know, like the influence isn't in it's given form any more. The influences are... I know it all now. I've known it for quite a while, you know, I know it all. I don't really play too much, you know. It's just a thing now. It's uh... I know how to do it now. I know the music. I know... I don't have to think in terms of where, or what kind of tune I want these words to, you know? It's a... It's more or less of a... I don't have to hold anything back now. Before, I used to have to hold things back. I had to hold a lot of things back. I had to hold a lot of things back. I snuck 'em through...

NH: Yeah.

BD: ...but not too many people really realized it, you know. I snuck it through on my second record. It's not... with very pretty melodies in but...

NH: Why did you have to hold them back?

BD: Well, I still had to make it then. I still had to, you know, survive, you know, I still had to, uh... you know.

NH: What, you mean, you thought it might be too far out?

BD: No, not far out. I didn't want to really, uh, you know... I didn't really want to... you know, I mean, if somebody was gonna give me 350, you know, if I did a certain thing that wasn't that hard for me to do, I'd do it, you know. If they wouldn't give me the 350, you know, if I went along with what, if you want to call ideals, my ideals aren't that important to me. I don't really care. I don't really have any, you know, so it didn't matter. You know, like, that was transforming a personal thing into that. I wasn't really that big when I started out. I was just playing. I had no idea I was gonna be playing now. You know, when I started playing, I was just playing acoustical guitar, you know, easily understandable, that is, and the songs are very understandable too, and bread... not to scuffle.

NH: You mean if... you figure if some of the songs that you're doing now, where the lyrics... well, they...

BD: No, they're in their perfect form now. They're not in their... they're not in their form of hearing it perfectly. Not in the form of perfection. But they're in their perfect form, they're where they're supposed to be now. They're not, you know, in any kind of, you know... any kind of attempt to disguise anything. There's no, uh... it's all straight right down there. It's all, in another...

NH: What I meant was, do you feel if you had started with that kind of song it might have been harder to get...

BD: Well I did start with that kind of song. I did start that way. But I couldn't make it that way. It was impossible, totally impossible. I would have been a total failure, you know. I didn't really think... I didn't look ahead and say "Whohoohoo, if I do it this way now, I can do it this way later," and plan it all just like that. I mean, 'cause, you know, uh... but that's what it is. I mean, it's... you know.

NH: Why would it have been so impossible?

BD: Well, like I say, you know, it's... you have to pay everybody. You have to, you know, to have a band that makes music. Well, first of all, if you have somebody, you know... if you're playing with people, you know, you're playing with people. And when you don't have anything, that means you're all together. Everybody just doesn't hang out in their house, and then come on over. Like, if you're going to make something, you know, you've either gotta make it by yourself, you know, or else have it all set up for you.

NH: Well do you think that the songs you're doing now would've been harder for large numbers of people to understand at the beginning?

BD: Oh sure. Also I couldn't have written those songs back then, all stuff, I couldn't...

NH: Yeah, the two got together.

BD: But I... oh yeah, sure, if I just came out and sang Desolation Row five years ago, then I probably would've been murdered.

NH: How did you feel like at Newport and at Forest Hills, when some of the, let's say the old audience, or they thought they were the old audience, got so upset at hearing the electric guitar and all that, and the... new kind of material?

BD: Well, I figure there's a little boo in all of us, you know, and er, you know, like... it, uh... if they had a good time, you know, uh... like, what can I say, you know, if they had a good time booing. I mean there's just nothing I can say. I feel happy about. I mean, if they didn't have a good time booing, I gotta... I gotta think something's wrong somewhere, you know. Like, first of all, when you say "old fans", I know they're not my old fans who booed. I know they're not my old fans. They consider themselves probably as my old fans, but they're not my old fans really. The old fans are people like... they're in that, you know, 1,228 people that bought my first record. That's my old fans, you know.

NH: Yeah.

BD: Old fans are, you know, the 67 people that came into Gerde's, you know. Or the people that went down to the Gaslight – they're the old fans, they're the people that just hung around the East Side, you know, that stayed in the apartments. People I don't even see any more. People I haven't seen... who thought, you know, that I had it made on my, you know, second record.

NH: Yeah.

BD: Y'know, it's "Oh yeah, Dylan's got it made" and that's it, on the second record. That's what success meant then, you know. When I made my second record.

NH: How come they don't see you and you don't see them anymore?

BD: I've no idea where they are, you know. I hear from them too, once in a while. I... I don't know, you know. I see them once in a while. They're scattered all over, they really are.

NH: Have you heard that thing Murray the K's being saying on the air? It goes in a... in a poem, and I can't remember, but the idea is the people who boo Dylan are as prejudiced as the KKK.

BD: I believe that! By all means!

NH: Are you at all ever concerned about the fact that now that you're making it in the... you know, the way most people talk about making it... a lot of bread and all that stuff, that it'll be at all difficult not to be tempted to keep on being popular? In other words to stop going your own way?

BD: Yeah, there's always that temptation but I just know too well that it's just gonna, you know... it's just now, you know, it's not... I refuse to be any kind of... I don't know... Lawrence Welk or something like that. I don't know what else I can do. I'll continue making the records. They're not gonna be any better from now on. They're gonna be just different, that's all. The last record I made was, uh... I can't imagine when. Whereas, when I made my last record, before this, I still knew what I wanted to do on my next record. I don't know what I'm gonna do on my next record, but I know it's gonna be the same kind of thing, but just a little different.

NH: How can you be so sure it's not gonna be better? That you're not gonna find something that's beyond?

BD: Because on this last record, it's just too good. There's a lot of stuff on there which... I mean, I would listen to.

NH: What's the title of that one, uh...?

BD: *Highway 61 Revisited.*

NH: *Highway 61 Revisited*, yeah. Um. You don't call what you're doing now folk-rock, but how did you get... move in that direction? You know, bringing in the electric instruments, having that kind of rhythm, that kind of base?

BD: Well I've always done it. Even, you know... it was there on the second record, from one session, if you remember. And the reason it wasn't done any more is because I just couldn't... didn't have any bread to pay anybody else to come in. We just did it for that one session, you know. I didn't want to pay anybody else.

NH: So it's not so new at all, that new direction?

BD: No, it's not new in my mind. It's new in a lot of other peoples minds though, I guess. It's not new in my mind.

NH: What's your reaction, I think now of Irwin Silber. To me it's an idiotic position, but it's taken – Dylan isn't singing protest songs anymore, that must mean he's sold out. That kind of jibe.

BD: Well, that's his problem, you know. It's... I have really no reaction to it all. It's just a... you know, it's all the other thing. It's... I'm glad that he's... I mean, if he's happy, you know, I wish him the best. But he can, you know... I don't care. It doesn't matter what they say about me. It really doesn't. I mean, if anybody could really understand that, you know, as soon as... as long as they're troubled about me, I'm gonna be around, you know. As soon as everything gets straight...

NH: Would you elaborate on that a bit?

BD: Well, as soon as they, you know, start to, you know... I don't really know what they say. You know, I really don't know the ridiculous things they say. I know some of the things I do wrong, you know. I do a couple of things wrong. Once in a while I do something really wrong, you know, which I really can't see when I'm involved in it, and after a while I look at it later, I know it's wrong. I don't say nothin' about it. It's got nothing to do with music though, you know.

NH: Yeah.

BD: Well, that kind of thing is the only thing that means anything I do is wrong, you know, and... but this thing about, you know, I'm not singing protest songs is, you know... if they want to do that, that's... I have absolutely no contact with that. I have no respect for anything that, you know, they stand for to begin with, you know. Not in terms of

that, but in terms of... not only for them, personally, but like, I've no respect for the conversation on, you know... whenever somebody's got something to say, you know... I mean, I just don't have any respect for it. I think it's vulgar, obscene, you know, this... the idea of somebody having something to say.

NH: A message song.

BD: A message thing. It's, uh... then again, you know, like we have the literary world, or whatever have you, the museum types and this kind of thing, which also I have no respect for, you know. I just can't make it, you know. It's just a total thing which I just can't see. In my mind, you know, if something is, you know, artistic or valid or groovy or, you know, nice to be with, it should be out in the open, you know. It should be, you know, in the men's room and it should be, you know, places like that. It, uh...

NH: You are quoted as saying, like, what you have in the museums and what are in the books now really have no relationship to what's happening, to what's real, and that...

BD: Well, it never has, you know. It never really has. I mean, I don't see how it could. I really don't understand, you know. I'm not involved in that side of it, but, see, the Sing Out world just overlaps into that kind of world, whereas that is really why I can't really pay too much attention to it. It's just a stagnation thing, of putting books on the shelf, you know, like... like, once you read a book, you know, you just put it on a shelf and there it is, you know. If you wanna buy a painting, you've gotta go out and pay a lot of money for a painting. If you wanna see paintings, you've gotta, you know, pay to go in the museum. If you wanna see dancing, man, you have to go to... you have to mix with these theatrical people. If you wanna see a play – look who... Look at all the people you'd love to sit next to if you wanted to go see a Broadway play. You know, like, look at all that stuff which is really, in terms of just... you know, like, nobody with a dollar a day could go out and have anything to do with it, you know. It's like... I think a person's more lucky if they can buy a car. They can buy a car with a radio, well, they'd be much better off than if they have, you know, been straining to go see all these Broadway plays and museums and stuff that's, you know... because the same thing is on the radio.

NH: Yeah, I remember you being quoted as saying that it's on the radio and on records that you get a sense of what's happening.

BD: Well, it's not a sense of what's happening. It's like... the things now... I don't know if you know, you know, the Motown Music Company?

NH: Yeah, yeah. I get all their records.

BD: Well, you know, just, like, to listen to one of those records, you know, like, they may not sound the same and stuff like that, but that's like... listening to one of those records... I mean, if you can't understand the whole total thing, you know, on... what's it all about... you know, then you've got to go to plenty of museums, man! Really. You gotta go to museums, drink a lot of coffee and wear a banana, man.

NH: Somebody was saying, though, he said he started to play some of those Motown records at a very slow speed, and he said he was quite "shocked", unquote, 'cause some of those lyrics were very, uh... what was the word? Lewd. Does that bother you at all?

BD: I don't think they're lewd on Motown. They're usually... not lewd. Say, I've had many stuff... I've had stuff banned for me, for being lewd. I mean, it depends what you think is lewd. You know, lewd...

NH: How would you define...

BD: It's like Lewd was the name of a person, Lewd. John Lewd. I know John Lewd.

NH: Is there anything in words... you know, like, Lenny Bruce would say there is nothing in a word that can be bad. It's just a word.

BD: Yeah. That's true. I mean, I don't see how anything man, you know... I don't... I'm not afraid of words. I mean, maybe a lot of people are afraid of words, but that's, you know, who you're dealing with. People are afraid of words, that's... a lot of people are afraid of words. Well, you know, that's a shame. That's worse than being frightened of a dog.

NH: That line's gonna last. Ewan McColl had a thing where he said that you were so eager to get immediate success you deliberately wrote down to your audience, and he said you avoided, during the protest song period, you avoided basic issues 'cause you had no real anger. Your passion was manufactured.

BD: Ugh! Who's Ewan McColl?

NH: He's that Scottish actor and folk singer, you know.

BD: Is he famous?

NH: In Scotland.

BD: Well, I don't know... you know, like, uh... I've never written down to anybody.

NH: Yeah.

BD: You know, I certainly, uh... if he say's I wasn't angry, you know... I've never met him really. I don't know what he does for a living, you know. Is he a...

NH: He plays clubs in London and he records, that kind of thing.

BD: Is he famous?

NH: Um, among the real hard-core folk people.

BD: Oh he's probably a little bit angry, you know, that he's not really famous. You know, really famous, you know. I certainly can't, uh... I certainly... he's not... I don't even know the fellow. I can't really comment on these things. I'm sure he's got good intentions, but...

NH: Yeah. Do you ever feel a weight at all at the fact that there are all these kids who... they not only listen to the records, but it's almost like some of them try to absorb as much of what they think is going on on those records as possible, and if they don't make you a model, they're certainly being very influenced by what they think is you. Does that ever...

BD: Well, I think it's good being what some of them think, I know that you know... First of all, what do you mean, like...

NH: Well, I know kids starting twelve up and they say that this is... this guy is... nobody manipulates him. He's gone his own way and that kind of thing.

BD: Yeah, well. That's right. But they can't very well do it at twelve.

NH: But do you feel any responsibility in that sense?

BD: No, no. I have no responsibility towards them.

NH: The music just says what it says and that's it.

BD: It's in the music, yeah. I'm certainly not gonna tell them to go out and do anything vulgar, you know. It's... I've no responsibility towards the fans, you know. They're... they're big grown-up people.

NH: You were saying that a message song is vulgar. Using message in another sense though, so far as you could put it into words, what is it you're trying to say through the songs you're doing now?

BD: Well, I'm not trying to say anything any more, you know. Like, once upon a time I tried to say "Well, I'm here, listen to me," you know. Once upon a time I tried to say "I'm here, I need some bread, you know, and I want to... will you let me stay at your house tonight?", you know. That's really what it boils down to, you know, I mean, I don't have to say that any more, you know, and now it's just letting, you know... the songs are just somebody else is hearing them, that's all it is. It's like, they'd be there if anybody listened to them or not, you know. They're not manufactured songs. They, you know, would... they would be there. They exist, and whoever listens to them, that's none of my business.

NH: And what they get out of it is none of their business either.

BD: None of my business either, you know. It's... I know what they are, you know, but I can't... I can't tell somebody what they are, you know.

NH: Nor can you tell anybody how to react to them or what they're supposed to get out of them.

BD: No.

NH: Mm. How do you account for the... 'cause it's not just a passing thing, at least, not in terms of three or four years... of this great attraction that you do have for more and more young people? You know, I go...

BD: Well, young people are really... young people have... they don't wanna have free minds, you know. They wanna be... they don't want to because, you know... they're young, you know. Whereas people once, you know, like, once they get out of college, or go to college, they get involved in their lifetime thing, and they really don't have time to be... they sort of really know that, you know, it's all kinda useless and, you know... anyway, they can't really make such a big fuss over somebody, you know. They can't really plan to go see a concert, you know, months ahead of time. You know, things don't have the same attraction for them. They have to put it out of their minds, you know. They have to look down on a lot of things, you know, because it makes them feel better. You know what I mean?

NH: Mm.

BD: Whereas kids, the kids don't have to think like that. They're all leaving home and they wanna get out, you know. This though, it's still another thing to them.

NH: Do you have any expectation that the kids listening to you now and being moved by what they hear... that some of them anyway may be somewhat different? That they won't get trapped in that kind of adult box and that maybe you've helped not getting them trapped?

BD: No, I don't think so. It's not for that kind of thing, you know.

NH: I guess we ought to stop for a...

Break in Interview

NH: Yeah. I had started to ask about whether you thought there was any hope that at least some of the kids now, particularly those listening to you, might not get into that adult box and maybe, if they don't, one of the reasons is the kind of stimulus you gave them.

BD: Yeah, but it's not in my mind, though, my way of thinking. I don't really... I don't think in terms of the people that listen to me, you know. I don't think in terms of the records, or who buys the records, you know, like. When it comes time, it's all in terms of what's happening here, around here. It's, you know, a total other world than a teenage market. I'm not gonna fall for being any kind of spokesman for them, or trying to teach them anything, because it'd be kind of silly, you know. It's a whole other thing. If it happens that way, you know, then, fine. But it's...

NH: You're not out to save them.

BD: No, no. I certainly wouldn't run over them on the street or anything, you know. Or if somebody really needed... if somebody needed a mouthful of water, I'd probably, you know, give them...

NH: But you can't save their souls for them.

BD: No, I can't save their souls. I could... I can't save their souls for them.

NH: There was a quote in a *Newsweek* piece where you said "I've never written a political song. Songs can't save the world. I've gone through all that. When you don't like something, you've gotta learn to just not need that something." Is there anything you'd add to that?

BD: No.

NH: That's pretty much what you feel?

BD: Yeah.

NH: The idea... that, you know, like, the Pete Seeger idea that you can change men's hearts and that sort of thing...

BD: It's not true at all.

NH: No. Can anything? I mean, do you have any hope that there might be a new society, to use that kind of old terms for...

BD: No, no. I don't know... I don't even think in terms of society, you know. Society, you know, fights among itself, you know. All societies do I guess. And I'm not really part of any society like that. I don't really know any more.

NH: I know the earlier write-ups used to say "Well, here's Dylan. He's a social critic. He's shown us the hypocrisy in American life and all in the..."

BD: Yeah, but, see it's not what it was really about. They could say that very easily about me, you see. It doesn't take much balls to say that, you know, or to write me up like that, because in fact it's very easy to see I wasn't even a part of the society, their society, you know. They could come round and see the concerts and write stories about me and see me at a party or something, but it's very easy for to say "Here he's condemning society," when I wasn't a part of that society. It's very easy, you know, for somebody to get kicked by somebody that's not a part of that society. Now let's say somebody like, you know, General McNamara – he starts criticizing the society – now they're gonna take... now they're gonna start worrying about it a little bit. But nobody has to worry about anybody from the outside, that's very evidently on the outside, criticizing their society, because he is on the outside and, you know, he's not in it anyway. And so, they can just keep themselves happy, you know, and think that something, you know, is... you know, romanticize things. But it's not true at all.

NH: Do you, or did you, consider yourself from the outside a social critic? or was it just...

BD: No, I wasn't really a social critic. It was just like, you know... it's like, I knew where to put the song, you know. I knew where the slot was, you know. That's all. Nothing more to it than that.

NH: Yeah. Speaking of being outside the society, one of the things that Joan is doing is – herself and trying to get other people not to pay income tax as a way of protesting foreign policy. What's your view of that kind of criticism of the society from the outside?

BD: Well, she doesn't live in the society, you know. You can't go around criticizing things you're not a part of, you know. That's no way to make something better, you know. I'm sure, you know, that she's, you know, got a very good point there, keeping not paying her money to the, you know, tax department. If that's a question, like, you know, am I gonna do it, I'm not gonna do it, you know, I'm gonna pay. I'm not gonna get in trouble with those people, you know. I mean, I live here. I wouldn't have what I have really in this country unless it was this country. Wouldn't have it in another country. I'm not gonna, you know, go along with them and I'm not gonna go along with anything they do. I'm just not gonna be a part of a lot of these things which they do, that's all. But that's not trying to wave any flag, that's just me, you know. You know, if I was gonna, you know, not pay my income tax, that means, first thing, all the papers are gonna come up and they're gonna say "Bob Dylan doesn't pay his income tax," you know. You know, it's like, you know, what goods' that gonna do? They don't need my money. It's just a form of, you know, saying what you do, that's all. It's not gonna make a dent or anything. You know, if somebody wants to pay their income tax, I figure that's fine. If somebody doesn't want to pay their income tax, that's fine too. You know, I'm certainly not condemning anybody that doesn't pay their income tax. I mean, most people don't really pay their rightful income tax. I think it's kind of a bad point to come out and stress it, because it's gonna be hard on a lot of other people, who really don't pay a lot of their income tax.

NH: You mean there's people gonna start looking more closely at all of them?

BD: Yeah, yeah.

NH: Another thing, and this is squareville, but people'll say, well, isn't Dylan in a sense playing a role? 'Cause he's not a country guy or whatever, but the dress is informal and to a, let's say the Columbia Record context, it's, if not bizarre, at least, you know, very distinctive. Is that a kind of a stance? Or just more comfortable?

BD: Well, it's just clothes I wear, you know. That's something which... I certainly don't... I dressed in blue jeans for a long time, right? I dressed in shirts and clothes and everybody said "Look how funky he looks," you know. They made a big point out of it. Well, you know, like, it doesn't take much thinking, you know... I didn't really have many clothes, you know, back when I played on... back, you know... I didn't really have many. 'Cause I didn't really know what clothes were, you know. Now, I'm not gonna walk around like I used to walk around. I've got money to buy better clothes now. Why should I walk around like a, you know, like a clown? Like, I look like a normal person now. I'm not gonna look like...

NH: But also you're not gonna go for Brooks Brothers or whatever, 'cause that's not your style.

BD: Well, it's that I don't like that style. No, I mean that Ivy League style. No, I don't like that.

NH: What about the feeling among some people that you've become, in a way, your own kind of establishment? You know, surrounded by people, kind of hard to get to. Does this jibe with, you know, the feeling that you're talking about... everybody being egalitarian and no pomp, you know, no...

BD: I'm not talking about anybody. That's their own paranoia.

NH: You don't feel that you've become that much... of like the old movie star thing, with hangers-on, like Sinatra...

BD: I haven't got hangers-on, stuff like that.

NH: Getting back to the "look" thing again, like Sonny and Cher, is there any significance, do you think, to the long hair business and the... all that?

BD: No, there's not really that much significance. It's just... either you like to, you know, wear your hair a certain way or you don't. It's certainly infested a lot of minds with, you know, trouble, but, you know, I really see no reason for it.

NH: You don't think anybody's trying to prove anything that way?

BD: No, no. It's not that thing at all. Well I must admit it looks pretty incredible at first when you see, you know... if you've ever been to England and you see people... people just look a whole other way over there, you know. They really look like their ancestors, whoever; Prince Valiant, you know. All kinds of weird people. Over here they don't... there's nothing... you can't even compare it with the look over there. They had a thing in some magazine a while back, showing long hair, showing a long-haired person in the United States. And they showed beach-boys, kinda people with hair that comes down a little bit, you know, on the back of their neck. Then they showed some kids in Chicago, rebelling, with their hair coming down a little bit on their forehead a little bit. Then somebody else, you know, in Hollywood, California, with a little bit over their ear. Then it showed, you know, the last picture showed a picture outside of a pub in England, with kids about 17, 18 years old, just standing around. Yeah, and just no comparison in terms of people, man, like they just, I mean, you know, could tell they weren't worried about long hair, you know.

NH: It's not rebellion or anything like that?

BD: No, no. It's not a rebellion kind of thing. It's just another way... a kind of thing which, I don't know, I guess most people can't really see themselves doing, you know. It's an attitude I guess, you know.

NH: The attitude being...

BD: That attitude of, you know, "why not?", you know.

NH: Yeah, that's it "Why not". It's like, I get asked once a week, "why have you got a beard". Why not? This "why not" thing, do you feel that among the younger generation there maybe is becoming more freedom? Like, the kid... for example, more and more of the younger people using pot or LSD or being a lot freer about sex...

BD: I don't see... I don't really know that many of the younger people, you know, like. That's... that really is... it's fine if they use pot and LSD and heroin and sex and everything. I mean, that's groovy. But, I mean, I don't really know any of them, you

know. If you're speaking of young people now, you mean, you know, kids in high school and stuff like that.

NH: Yeah.

BD: I don't know... I don't really... I really have no contact with them, not directly, you know. I read about them in the papers.

NH: Yeah.

BD: But I don't really...

NH: From what you read, do you think that that gives some hope, that they'll be, again when they grow up, they'll be less hung up with conformity and with playing safe?

BD: Oh yeah. But what it comes down to now is that somebody learns something so fast, by the time they're twenty-one they know that it's all bullshit, you know. And they have to get to really think of something to do, you know.

NH: You mean the thing like pot or LSD just isn't gonna be that much of a...

BD: Yeah. Most people like... you get to it like... a lot of people get turned on when they're forty-five and they realize what a waste everything's been. I know some people like that, you know. They're really, really, you know... I mean, they're happy that they apparently know a few things, but like they really – go, shall we say? – go to pot, you know. They quit their jobs and they just sit around the house and laugh.

NH: This is with pot, do you mean?

BD: I mean people that really sort of understand that... at forty-five... that they've just been really hung up their whole life, you know. It's not necessary to think about if your chick is with somebody else, man, you know. The world's filled with too many people, you know, and...

NH: But by "turned on", you don't mean to anything, just to a realization.

BD: No. Just to the realization of things, you know. There's many thousands of ways to realize things, you know. They have even groups across the country. They have self-realization groups somebody can become a part of.

NH: Yeah. And there's no guarantee that, if you try pot, that's gonna turn you on to any kind of realization of...

BD: I guess everybody's smoked pot. I mean, pot is sort of behind the times now, you know. It's like... to get busted for pot is kind of like... it's not really, it doesn't really make much of a stature any more.

NH: What does? LSD?

BD: Nothing really depressive. Any of that stuff is just... kind of like, just a sign of very uncoolness. Unless they plant it on you or something.

NH: You were saying that, if the kids now... they learn it so fast that by twenty-one it really has no meaning any more, in the sense of what? That they realize that that too doesn't bring them answers?

BD: They realize that it's really a drag to plan for tomorrow their whole life. And realizing in terms of really hard reality that tomorrow never comes. Like, you always wake up and it's today. You know, tomorrow just never seems to come. And, you know, there is no yesterday. So what's left is just, you know, a nothing.

NH: Well, live in the present.

BD: Yeah. But... you know, I know a lot of people know this... I know a lot of people know this... I didn't know this really, you know, when I was sixteen or seventeen. But a lot of people know it now. A lot of people at sixteen really know now that... you know, the communication is so great, you know. Communication of TV, you know, and radio and letters can get across the country fast. And telephones... there's no reason for anybody not knowing anything, really, by the time they're that age. And a lot of people don't, you know. A lot of people... you know...

NH: By "knowing anything" you mean knowing, again, that it's all in the present.

BD: Not that it's all in the present. To know pot, or to know any drug, is fine, and it's not gonna fuck you up, you know. You know, that's one thing. But to know it in terms of

not saying anything about it, that's another thing, you know. Anybody, you know, when they, you know, smoke pot, even when you're smoking pot for the first time, you know – whoopee – you've got to tell your friends. I mean this kind of stuff. I mean, that's not really, you know, so great or anything like that, you know.

NH: It's like what counts is not whether whatever it is you're using or not using but that realization about the futility of planning for tomorrow.

BD: Yeah. The thing of, like it doesn't even matter, you know, if like... it's you know, a silly thing to even... to discuss, you know. You see lectures all the time in the *Village Voic*e, lectures on everything. Absolutely everything. They talk about, you know, the relationship of Ghandi, you know, to pipe tobacco, man! And I'm sure they're gonna get a hall filled, you know, and you see reasons for, you know, the coming of the camel, you know. There are thousands of people there, gonna go to see it. And of course, they all wear glasses, you know, and... This is not really a valid world, this is, you know, a... what are you gonna call it? I don't know. That's what they call an intellectual kind of world. It's boring, you know, it really is boring. Can't do anything.

NH: Then I know some of the kids in Students For A Democratic Society, you know, working in the ghettos, and they say "Well, the kids who figure they have the answer through pot or whatever are really running away from everything".

BD: Well, I never felt as if there's an answer through pot. I don't want to make this, kind of, a drug interview or anything, like. LSD like... once you take LSD a few times... I mean, LSD is a medicine. You know, you take it and you know... you don't really have to keep taking it all the time. It's nothing like that. It's not that kind of thing, you know, whereas pot, you know, nobody's got any answers through pot. Pot's, you know, not that kind of thing. I'm sure that the people that say that the people who figure they got their answers through pot, first of all, those people who say that, they're just inventing something. And the people that really actually think that they got their answers through pot, probably never even smoked pot, you know. I mean, it's like... pot is, you know... who smokes pot any more, you know, anyway? Pot is...

NH: Getting back to music, you were saying that you liked the early Presley. I wondered about somebody like Johnny Cash. Now, how does he affect you? 'Cause he's the guy that said that...

BD: That's a very funny thing to ask. I can't really talk about it too much. I like Johnny Cash a lot. I like everything he does really.

NH: Yeah, I'm just beginning to pick up on him.

BD: His early records were much better, I think, than his latest records. Although he's written some fantastic things. He's really written some great things. He wrote a rewrite of *Frankie And Johnny*. Did you ever hear that?

NH: No.

BD: That's better, much better than even the traditional version. He wrote *Big River* and all those songs, like that.

NH: What about the, you know, Rolling Stones and The Animals? How strongly do you react to them, what they're writing and singing?

BD: They've just... the Rolling Stones just recently began to write. I don't think the animals have ever written anything. Well, I don't know. I don't think the Rolling Stones consider themselves writers or anything.

NH: How about the music itself?

BD: The music is just hard, straight music. It's...

NH: Do you dig it?

BD: Do I personally dig it?

NH: Yeah.

BD: Well I... I would... yeah, I dig some of it. I dig some of it, some of the Rolling Stones music. I dig some of The Animals music.

NH: And the Beatles; you got to see them, I guess, fairly often. In fact I read somewhere, George Harrison said that you said that what you did mostly was laugh all night.

BD: Yeah. That's true.

NH: What kind of communication's going on there?

BD: I don't know about communication. It's just a... you know, I can just laugh all night, that's really about all.

NH: How do you feel about Lennon and McCartney as writers? 'Cause some of the jazz guys are finally finding that their tunes are pretty interesting.

BD: Oh, their tunes are... yeah, their tunes really are good. Yeah, they're alright.

NH: How would you, now I'm gonna ask you to be like a musicologist, but, where do all these things fit in? Where's the mainstream in terms of, you know, country and western, rhythm and blues, bluegrass, all that? How do you see it all in some kind of perspective? Or does it matter?

BD: Well, it doesn't really matter, you know. I don't really think about it, you know. I don't... what does that mean, "mainstream"?

NH: I don't know. I never knew.

BD: Oh! That puts it in a whole other light. I certainly wouldn't know. I have no idea.

NH: That stuff to you is just irrelevant? It depends on how it sounds?

BD: Yeah.

NH: One thing I wanted to ask, about jazz, which seems to have lost the kids entirely. You appeal to them, the Beatles do, the Stones, the Righteous Brothers. But jazz seems to have gone past the young almost all the way. Why is that?

BD: Well, jazz is, you know, I mean... I don't know what you mean by "jazz". You know, like the modern jazz kind of thing?

NH: Yeah. Let's say Miles or Thelonius Monk. That kind of thing.

BD: Well, I don't know. It's more like a little room kind of thing, you know. I would think. I've been in some of those places and you've gotta take the full trip. I mean, you can't just come in, you know, in the middle of a song and get excited, you know. You've gotta start from the beginning and you've gotta be ready. It's like, you've gotta sit down there and you've gotta say – "OK, I'm gonna read this now, you know". It's music, you know. A lot of people really aren't equipped to deal with sounds, you know. In such a way that they have no... they can't see any lead, they can't seem to follow. Whereas they can only follow straight chords. They don't wanna follow anything else, you know. They don't care how far out it is, as long as they can follow it in some kind of way. Like, a lot of jazz you just can't follow. I mean, you can, you know, if you sit down and just take it from the beginning and do that. But, I mean, that's a whole... that's a hard... that's work, you know, like. Who really wants to do that?

NH: Do you figure your songs are at all work? Like the images...

BD: No. Oh, that might be work, but, like, they're all easy to follow.

NH: Musically?

BD: Yeah. I mean, they're all easy to follow. I know, because I can follow them, you know. And if I can follow them then anybody can follow them.

NH: You're through with the protest thing, you know. But what's your reaction to this growing thing of, you know... like *Eve Of Destruction*. Somebody like P. F. Sloan, who says that his inspiration comes from being bugged most of the time. Do you think this is a passing thing?

BD: Yeah, that's passing. Yeah, that'll just go so long... that protest thing, you know... *Eve Of Destruction*, you know... it's nice, you know. It's good that stuff like that is being on the radio. But it's... I don't know what it means, you know. It's protest music. Protest music is... we all know what protest music is... been out in New York for about five years. That comes from California. That's a whole California thing now. Which, when California gets into something, they really go all out, you know, But...

NH: Why do you think it's gonna fade away?

BD: Well, because people are just gonna get tired of it, you know. Like they get tired of anything. They don't wanna hear that stuff all the time, you know, protesting all the time. I mean, you know...

NH: Do you think the kids who buy the records like *Eve Of Destruction* buy it 'cause they agree with what the guy's saying?

BD: No, I think that was a good song. That was hard, that was exciting. That was... you know, anyway, you'd get sick of it too. You'd even get sick of *I Got You, Bab*e. You get sick of... you get sick of anything, you know. Anything, you gonna get sick of. Doesn't matter what it is.

NH: But I meant some of the other songs, that aren't as good musically as *Eve Of Destruction*. Do you think the kids are digging the message, or is it just part of a fad thing?

BD: Yeah, well... it's better to have them buying those things, I guess, and thinking about something. But... you know, like, *Don't Step On My Blue Suede Sho*es, like, Carl Perkins, man, you know, like, there's no comparison in which is better, you know. Absolutely no comparison, you know. Like, *Don't Step On My Blue Suede Sho*es, sung by Carl Perkins, you know, is, you know... that's really, you know... more listenable, you know. Or you could see more in it than that, or I can than I could in *Eve Of Destruction*. Only just because my mind works that way. Lot of people, you know, can't really see as much in that, you know.

NH: We started off talking about, you know, people like Cole Porter and Gershwin. Do you think it's accurate to say that what's happening now, on records, is a lot closer to reality than the Porter, Vincent, Youman things, which was really kind of for a small group of sophisticates living pretty well?

BD: Well, it's the same way as everybody. That's even all the poetry books, you know. All the intellectual books, you know, just appeal to a small group of people, you know. Even people, you know, like Robert Frost, you know, Ezra Pound, you know... all of those people, you know. Even people, you know, like, you know, Jean Genet. They all just appeal to a certain crowd of people, you know. And nobody else really. They only sell, you know, a certain amount of books and they sell them to people who are just going to talk among themselves about it. But they don't really get out into places where the people who don't really know each other can... all of a sudden are swarmed over by, you know... Well, what would happen, you know, if the United States was just... all of a sudden *Ulysses* came on the radio one day, you know? Or what would happen, you know, if it was just on top 40 radio station? What would happen if they played, you know, the movie *We Are All Murderers*, man, on a double bill with an Elvis Presley flick? But it just don't happen, you know.

NH: What would happen?

BD: Well, I don't know, but... I guess, I mean... why not? Why not do it, you know? Why not play, you know, those kind of things together?

NH: So anyway, that's why Ralph Gleason keeps writing that what has happened is that popular music has become democratized for the first time. You've got negro influences and country influences and songs that mean something to the kids. Do you think that's a fair appraisal?

BD: Yeah, but then again, you know, like, I really have no contact with kids. I... what I'm doing is... somebody just that's watching, you know, and listening. I would do it, you know, if they didn't. I've always done it and it's that kind of thing, you know.

NH: Do you have any contact with the kid dan... you know, the new dances like the Dog and the Frug?

BD: No, I have no contact with that. In a lot of the towns we go into the Club. At some of the clubs they dance, but... I have no contact with those kind of dances, no.

NH: You've also said that "Teenagers all talk a different language. Name me a teenager. I have no recollection of being a teenager."

BD: Yeah, I told that – "name me a teenager". You know, "name me one teenager, like, who is a teenager", and he couldn't do it, you know. Name me a teenager, I mean, who knows a teenager, you know. It's like, you know, I asked him what he meant by "teenager" and I said "Name me a teenager. Who do you mean when you speak of the word "teenager"? You know, you're sort of insulting a lot of people there. Like, who really do you mean?" And he just couldn't think of anybody that he wanted to insult.

NH: And when you said that you don't recollect being one, that means that when you were fifteen or sixteen you were Bob Dylan at fifteen or sixteen.

BD: Right. I wasn't a teenager, no.

NH: Then he quotes you as talking about enemies – "They can crush you, they can kill you and lay you out on 42nd Street and put the hoses on you". Who are... who do you figure are your enemies?

BD: The enemies?

NH: Yeah.

BD: The enemies are those people that can crush you and send you to 42nd Street and that kind of stuff. I don't know... The enemies can be... you know, the enemies are so... the enemies... I don't really... don't even know any enemies. But there's just a lot of people, you know, who show... without a better name can be referred to as enemies.

NH: How would you characterize them? I mean, what...

BD: Well they usually have acid coming out of their ears, you know...

NH: But do yourself feel that in any specific sense you have enemies either in music or whatever? Anybody.

BD: No. I guess there are a lot of people that want, you know, to see me done away with, you know, and...

NH: Why?

BD: Well, the obvious reason is because there are people that want to see anybody done away with, you know. But, I mean, I can't really think in terms of that kind of thing.

NH: A thing you said to Shelton was "What I write is much more concise now than before – it's not deceiving." What did you mean by "deceiving"?

BD: Well, deceiving means, like... like, when I wrote those songs, you know, a lot of those songs I wrote before, they were written within a small circle of people...

NH: You mean like Masters Of War and...

BD: Yeah, there was a small circle of people that heard them, you know. And when some of them were brought finally to the outside, somebody else who heard 'em just weren't equipped really to take it and know it, you know, the same way. You know what I mean? It's like... I don't mean deceiving, it's like... straightforward blunt kind of thing and where somebody else could possibly think that, you know, something is happening which isn't happening. That's like, uh... I don't... I can't even remember back then. I can remember in little rooms, you know, writing those things. But I also remember I was writ... I took the time out to write those things. The other stuff I was doing didn't even resemble those songs at all. They resembled more what I'm writing today, in terms of songs, you know. Which I wouldn't consider writing then in terms of songs, because I know nobody could, you know...

NH: Yeah. How could you explain the difference? Although it's there to hear it. But, I mean, if you wanted to put it into words...

BD: Between then and now?

NH: Between then and now.

BD: Well the difference is, back then I was me and now I'm me.

NH: No better answer than that. You mentioned now that, you know, it's hard for you to just go on a bus, let's say, for three days. Is there any other way that all the renown has changed your private life? Are you still able to keep a private life to any degree?

BD: Oh yeah, to some degree, you know. I mean it's... yeah... yeah, it's a private life, but it's just that I don't really get around much, you know. I don't... I keep a private life... it's

down, you know, to a certain thing, but... it's, you know, it's what it is. I can't really ask any more about it than that, you know, it's... I certainly don't want any cameras coming in on my private life.

NH: Yeah, and you'd like to keep it private. Do you still have the motorcycle?

BD: Yeah, yes, somewheres. I don't really ride it too much down here...

NH: Why? 'Cause I remember you used to be very fond of that.

BD: Yeah, well now I'm gonna put my name on it and sell it for a lot of money.

NH: So that the whirr of that kind of activity is kind of diminished.

BD: Well, yeah. When I come to think of it, I have ridden it one time during the whole summer. It's kinda senseless to...

NH: Why did it stop?

BD: Well I guess it stopped because I didn't ride it that much, you know, and a lot of people were fooling around and I said this is really silly. It got messed up.

NH: We were talking about Joan, you know, in terms of her political... you know...

BD: Yes.

NH: How about music? 'Cause I remember you once said she changed your definition for a time of what beautiful was. 'Cause you thought it had to be ugly.

BD: Well, no. You read that on the back of liner notes.

NH: Yeah, yeah.

BD: Well, you know, I wrote those liner notes, you know. I wrote those liner notes. I can't... yeah, well... I really don't... I haven't even looked at them. I don't know what they say, you know. But...

NH: How do you, in a sense, assess her? And also what do you think about the fact that she's using more and more of your songs. Do they sound that much different, when she does them, to your ear?

BD: Yeah, they... she does them OK, you know. There's nothing like that... she sings very well, you know, like, a certain kind of thing she sings really, really very good. It's not the kind of thing where you can really listen to it all the time, you know, or anything. But it's like... it is a thing, you know, it is a thing that definitely Joan Baez, you know, is, you know... is... sings validly, you know. And what she does is, you know... it's good, it really is, you know. I don't think she sings, you know, that good, but, you know...

NH: Have you ever had much conversation with her about non-violence. You know she's opening an institute or a training center...

BD: No, I've no... I beat her up once. That's about all.

NH: I take it then that your philosophy doesn't necessarily encompass non-violence as an absolute.

BD: I don't... I've never met any non-violent person, you know. When I meet somebody that's really non-violent, I can see how they act, I can, you know... you know, I will then make my decision as to whether non-violence is worth it, you know, to anybody at all. But I have never met anybody that's non-violent.

NH: Do you want to elaborate on that, beating her up? Or do we just drop that?

BD: Yeah. I just beat her up, that's all.

NH: OK.

BD: She wanted me to be non-violent.

NH: From what you've said, it comes down to, you know, living in the present, not worrying or expending energy on the future. Now, beyond that, and this is a slippery word, but, what are your values? Just for yourself, not in terms of what anybody else thinks. What is meaningful to you in how you live? What makes it, what doesn't make it?

Break in Interview.

NH: Yeah, I started to ask about a hard word to put into words – values. What, you know, what you live by, it sounds like Reader's Digest, but... what makes it and what doesn't in terms of your own feeling about what's worth doing and what isn't worth doing?

BD: Well, anything is worth doing really. In terms of the values, I just don't have any values. You know? I really can't... you know, I can't really think of any, you know. I'll do anything once. It's like, uh... I just don't have any values, you know, in terms of... values are supposed to raise your standard of being, evidently, you know.

NH: Yeah.

BD: It doesn't matter to me about my standard of being, you know. I know in my own mind, you know, that... I don't wanna hurt anybody or anything like that, and... that's about all I can say about it, you know. Ah, but then again, I know a lot of people are hurt, but it's not really me that hurts them, you know.

NH: What do you mean?

BD: Well, I mean like they're just deceived. But like, I haven't hurt them any.

NH: Yeah.

BD: But then again, you can actually come out and hurt somebody, you know. Like, I don't really worry too much about people who say they've been hurt by me, because, you know, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, it's not me that hurts them.

NH: But that's a value then, isn't it? Not wanting to hurt anybody.

BD: Well I guess so, but, you know... I mean, I would think that's everybody's thing, you know.

NH: But is it?

BD: Oh no, of course not. I guess not. No, well... even, even that ceases to be a value when, you know... even if there is somebody that wants to hurt somebody, you know... like, what if that person goes out and finds somebody that likes to be hurt? You know, they just keep it there on that level. I'll hurt you and I won't hurt anybody else, if you promise not to be hurt by anybody else except me, you know.

NH: What you're saying then is that everything is really relative. There aren't any absolutes

BD: I would think so.

NH: Yeah. Do you ever envision that you might get interested in politics or in foreign affairs like some of the folk singers are?

BD: No, no. That's really not my thing at all. I can't really see myself up on a platform with ways to help people that aren't gonna get me killed, really, if I really wanted to help anybody.

NH: What do you mean?

BD: Well, I mean if somebody's really got something to say, you know and they really can help somebody out, just bluntly, you know, obviously they're gonna be done away with, you know.

NH: Yeah. Do you have any people in public life, not heroes but people, that you especially respect, for one reason or another?

BD: In public life?

NH: Yeah.

BD: Umm. Well, I'm sure there are some. But I don't know of any.

NH: Are there any groups or musicians we haven't talked about, that you'd have something to talk about? Like, I don't know, the Righteous Brothers or Sonny and Cher. What do you think about what they do?

BD: No, no, I can't really... they're OK, you know, I don't...

NH: The last thing I wanted to ask was, going back, all the various things that became part of your growing-up process as a musician and as a composer – remember you've mentioned Big Joe Williams among others – how did all this, you know, take shape, so far as you can look back?

BD: Well, I just, you know, made up my mind very early that if there was anything you wanted, you know, you really had to... really had to, you know... make an attempt to

sacrifice everything, a lot of things. And there was nothing really that I wanted, 'cause, you know, you can look around and see people who've got just about anything you'd wanna think to have. And you can see how they are, how they act and what they're like, you know.

NH: How do they act? I mean...

BD: Well, they just act very strange. Let's say people, you know, who've got it all... you know, an inheritance and stuff like that, you know. And nice things, and that's all they've got, you know, is their things like that... Well, I didn't want anything like that. I knew that what would... however I did it, it would be in terms of some kind of creating something. No matter what it was, but it was me that did it, you know. Something which I could also do, you know, just for, you know, me. 'Cause I just made up my mind not to have anything, you know.

NH: How old were you when this was...

BD: I don't know. I was about eighteen, seventeen. I knew there was nothing I ever wanted.

NH: Materially, you mean?

BD: Yeah. And I didn't want anything, and I just made it from there. So I just drifted around. I mean, I've been up a lot of times round places with no places to go and it's been very early in the morning and stuff like that, and it never fazed me. It was never like, well, here I am, stuck on the, you know, highway, bumming down the railroad line, hell, and I feel sad. It wasn't that kind of a thing at all. It was like, right out of my mind.

NH: Does all of this bread now, like I read you're gonna make a million and a half in the next eighteen months, does that mean anything to you?

BD: Well yeah. All it does is that it enables me to stay away and not get... you know, not really go insane, with all the people that grab at you. And it's honest, you know, it's honest bread. I mean, it's honest in terms of – when you're talking about all the bread, what we're talking about is not the concert money or the, you know, record sales money, that stuff. The money has come from just writing these songs.

NH: That's where most of it comes from.

BD: Yeah, most of it comes from there. And that, all that money, you know, like, it's there ... I really can't think about it one way or another.

NH: Do you have that scene where somebody takes care of it and invests it?

BD: Oh yeah, I don't even touch it, man. I don't want anything to do with it. I don't want to be like that.

NH: What do you thinks gonna happen to it eventually?

BD: Well, eventually it'll probably just blow away, back where it came from.

NH: Do you think your renown is gonna blow away, you know, the way things just sometimes disappear?

BD: Oh sure, to a whole crowd of people that are just buying the hit records now. The majority of those people probably won't have heard of me for a couple of years, probably.

NH: And then maybe a new generation of kids might find somebody else?

BD: Yeah. I don't really worry about fading in or fading out, though. That's another thing.

NH: In a way, would you welcome being anonymous again?

BD: Well, I would to a degree, but not really. I mean, I wouldn't wanna be anybody except me.

NH: I meant anonymous only in the sense that you could walk down the street and...

BD: Oh yeah. Well, anybody would welcome that. That's another thing, but... then again, being me I can get all sorts of little things, you know, favors and stuff like that for other people, you know, so that's...

NH: Oh, we didn't go back to that... the various kinds of musics that, as you were growing up, helped shape what you were gonna do. Big Joe Williams was one.

BD: Well, that was later. That was when I left there. The only music I heard up until I left Minnesota was – I didn't hear any folk music at all. I just heard, you know, country and western music, rock n' roll and polka music.

NH: Who were the ones that you heard then that you especially dug? Country and western, let's say.

BD: Oh, just about all the people. There was Marty Robbins. Not Marty Robbins, I didn't think (rest of sentence mumbled and indistinct) Lefty Frizzell, you know, Faron Young, all those people like that.

NH: And rock n' roll?

BD: Well, all the people that were around. Elvis Presley and Carl Perkins, Gene Vincent, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis.

NH: And then what was added on, like in the folk field?

BD: Well... then it came down to the fact that to make it alone you had to, you know, play alone. So you discovered folk music, where people had to, you know, play alone. And, you know, first it started with, you know, Odetta. Oh no, it starts with Harry Belafonte. It starts with Harry Belafonte. You know, him. And right away you know he's not really where it's at.

NH: Why?

BD: Well, I mean, you know, you know right away, and you haven't got that much time to spend on it. Harry Belafonte, I mean, you know, that he just doesn't know that many songs.

NH: Yeah. Then Odetta?

BD: Then Odetta and you go through these stages. Josh White... till finally you arrive at Woody Guthrie, who sounds pretty weird, you know. And obviously who looks like... you know, looks like you, to some kind of degree. And I went through all Woody Guthrie's songs. And, you know, then the folk music, which I'd heard somewhat to a degree. I knew people that sung Barbara Allen and stuff like that. And I listened to all that music. And a lot of it I heard before, I mean, I really actually have heard before, I've actually heard old people singing a lot of the folk songs that... like Lord Thomas and stuff like that. I've heard these songs before when I was young.

NH: You mean around where you grew up?

BD: Yeah, yeah. I've heard people sing them. I've never paid much attention, you know, to people that did it. But people are... you know, the people sitting on their porches and then sometimes, you know, when you'd walk by, they wouldn't be singing anything that you'd hear on the radio. They'd be singing folk songs, you know. But who would wanna hear 'em? Like, they were a drag, you know. But I remember hearing 'em, you know, and... you know, there was stuff like that.

NH: After Guthrie was there anybody particular?

BD: Uh, no, not really. Woody Guthrie really hasn't influenced that... what I'm doing now. He hasn't had much to do with the influence of these past two records. In fact he really hasn't had any influence at all on the past two records.

NH: Yeah, I haven't heard any.

BD: The influence has all been on the first record, second record, third record. The fourth one, it was kind of wearing off a little bit. But that was still confined to the folk music circle. When I say influence, I mean total influence. I mean either writing or singing, you know. I mean, his influence is... is in his manner of speaking, you know. His influence is in his topics that he writes about. His influence lies in his phrasing, you know, and stuff like that. Now there's really no influence and I don't know what it is any more. It's not influenced by him really at all as much as... the songs are influenced by sounds.

NH: Sounds?

BD: Yeah. The songs are just... you know, like opening up a window, you know. Just looking out on a street, you know. Like every... it's all gonna be a different street. Or just being

out on a street, just a whole kinda thing, which is not a thing to write about. I don't write about anything any more. Those songs aren't about anything.

NH: Yeah, there's a kind of surrealistic feeling, especially in the last record, in which you get a... all kinds of images getting together. It's a very provocative kind of thing.

BD: Well, you see, you know, they're not really images to me. You know, like, I know what they are, they're real, you know, they're... they might be images to other people who've never seen them, you know, like. But I know what those things are and, uh... when it comes time for me to be an image-maker, now you're really gonna hear some fantastic images. But up till now there's been no images really.

NH: Yeah. Well how do you define an image-maker?

BD: Something which I haven't seen, you know.

NH: Oh I see. Where it comes entirely out of your imagination.

BD: Yeah. These songs are not out of my imagination.

NH: Out of experience.

BD: Yeah. You can call it experience, I guess, or something.

NH: What you've seen or whatever.

BD: Yeah.

NH: How do you feel when you hear kids coming up now who try to sound like you? You know, all of a sudden you're an influence.

BD: I like that, you know. I'd rather have them have me for an influence than... Carroll Baker or, you know, Warren Beatty or somebody like that.

NH: It's... I wanted to be sure I was clear on one thing. You feel more like performing now 'cause the group's with you, which means there's less of that kind of pressure of being a soloist?

BD: Yeah. Also because I just want to. I really dig it, you know. I dig it. And the halls are all very full, you know. And there's... it's just a thing now. I always wanted to do it, you know.

NH: Why do you think it's become more fun for you in the last...

BD: Well, it's good because I'm more in control. I know what it's... I know more... it's like, uh... I know what I'm doing, you know. Before I used to do it, it just happened. Like, you want a concert for a long time, you know, and the first big concert I played with them was in Philadelphia. And we just went there, you know, in a car, and then got out, took the guitar and went up to the stage and sang for about three and a half hours, you know. I didn't know what I was going to sing. I was just standing there trying to think of things to sing. I sang just... and then I... after the concert I just put the guitar back in and I left. That was at Town Hall, and...

NH: Philadelphia?

BD: Yeah, Philadelphia. Then when we had one the next night, it was exactly the same thing, you know. That was fine for then, but I couldn't keep on doing the... I couldn't do that nowadays. I wear out my clothes every time I get on stage. I can't...

NH: You mean there's that much wear and tear?

BD: Well, yeah. It's either that or else I'm really... I play it now, you know. Now it's like every... I got... I'm not just standing there and thinking of what to play. Like, it's all down now and I know it, sort of, you know, And, uh...

NH: You're a professional.

BD: Well I hate to think of my term... myself in terms of that. Hate to think of my terms in self of that, really!

NH: Do you think of yourself in terms of being a folk singer? Does that term mean anything to you?

BD: No, it means absolutely nothing to me, folk singer. I know what folk music is, you know, that's why I really can't call myself a folk singer.

NH: Why?

BD: Well, you know, it's like... people, they're talking about folk music nowadays. Like, most of the people talking about it, they don't even know what they're talking about. It's like, when they... they always say that folk music, that you've gotta keep something simple, so that the people can understand it, right? Actually they're insulting a bunch of people by calling them people, right? So the people can understand it, you know, whereas when they really wanna look at folk music and at folk songs, there are some really strange, weird folk songs, you know, that have come down through the ages, based on nothing. Based on a legend or Bible or, you know, plague or... or religion, and just based on mysticism. There are a lot of those folk songs. Really a lot of them. And it's... you know, I don't understand where all this business is, you know. You gotta just keep things simple. This is like the labor movement kind of thing, which is all just total, you know, waste.

NH: Yeah.

BD: Look at all those labor people. They're all rich suburb people. Tell their kids not to buy Bob Dylan records.

NH: You mean the ones who came up with the simple labor songs of the thirties?

BD: Yeah. *Which Side Are You On*? I'm not asking anyone "which side are you on?" And which side can you be on? I mean, is there really only two sides to anything, you know?

NH: Why don't you consider yourself a folk singer then, in terms of what you know about folk music?

BD: Well, because I've got a very deep respect for it, you know. I respect folk music. I mean, I really do. You know, it's great man, it's great music, you know. There's no doubt about it. I'd rather listen to it sometimes than anything. But it's not a thing to play with. You know, you can't play around with it and have folk song groups and have folk gatherings and "let's all sing a bunch of folk songs". It's not that kind of thing at all, you know. It's just not that... people just lost the point. That is not the point of what a folk song is and who a folk singer is, you know.

NH: What is the point and who is the folk singer?

BD: Well, you know, you have a lot of these people in the south, who just sit around in places and, uh... they don't wanna be bothered with any collectors or Alan Lomaxes or anybody like that. They're not gonna sing any songs over tape-recorders. They're not gonna do that. They sit around, you know, and they can sing all by themselves. Or if somebody's in the room, they won't even know you. They're like a writer, you know, they're like, totally in a world of their own. They sing songs about things which mean something to them but don't mean a thing to anybody else. They talk about roses growing out of peoples brains, you know. And, you know... lovers who are geese, you know... and swans who turn into angels and, you know... There's some very hard stuff, you know, like much more harder than that. They really talk about things which you know they know about. Or if they don't know about, can feel it. That's what folk mus... that's what folk song... a folksinger singing a folk song, that's what I would think of. I certainly wouldn't think of any, you know, twenty-two year old kid going to a, you know, labour rally and singing some union songs. This is...

NH: You mean a folksinger is where it comes out of a whole inner world, a whole world really, of background, culture...

BD: Yeah, it's a whole world in somebody's head, you know. Where a folksinger, you know, can be a gas station man really, you know. We don' have to call folk singers, you know, southern mountain farmers. We don't have to call a folk song, you know, a song that has been living, you know for 1800 years. We can call anything a folk song, you know.

NH: Providing it's pertinent to the...

BD: Providing that it is in a rhythm of it's own and in a time of it's own, and somebody else is... whoever listens to it is allowed to listen to it, you know.

NH: Allowed? You mean, uh...

BD: They're allowed to listen to it. Not even to make a comment on it.

NH: It's not a performance, in other words.
BD: Right, it isn't a performance at all.
NH: Then what do you call yourself or consider yourself?
BD: Obviously when I'm on the stage I'm performing. Now, the records aren't performances. We could've made this last record a lot better than we did. But it's all down there, you know.
NH: Are you a folk singer then on the records?
BD: No, I'm not a folk singer really at all, you know. I'm not... I could call myself a folk singer. I mean, if it would mean anything. But it doesn't mean anything.
NH: What do you call yourself?
BD: I don't call myself anything, I really don't. I'm sort of a slot machine. Slot machine wonder!
NH: What do you do?
BD: I don't really have any titles which I would really wanna claim, you know.
NH: Is there anything I haven't asked that you think would be relevant? Or irrelevant?
BD: I don't know. No, well, it's... really it's... I don't know, somehow. I mean, somehow even, you know, the idea of where this is even gonna go. This interview is just... it's just, uh...
NH: Say some more about that. I wanna see if...
BD: I mean, who's even gonna read it, you know. Take the kinda people that are gonna read it. How much is the magazine, first of all? It costs what? A dollar or something?
NH: A buck and a quarter, something like that.
BD: Yeah, well, there's only a certain kind of people that's gonna read that magazine.
NH: Seventy-five?
BD: Certainly, like...

Three million people (unknown speaker)

BD: I don't wanna find that I'm in a magazine, gonna make some bunny chick someplace, you know, to be in the magazine. But I don't see anything that's really gonna be done, you know. I don't expect to know anything 'cause I can't... I don't know where the outlet is for what I do, you know. The only outlet I know of is records, and I don't know who buys the records. It's the same with the magazine. I have no idea really who buys the magazine except that I know it's a very funny-looking group of people, you know. I mean people which I don't freely associate with. I don't know anybody that associates with. And we go to towns and we see the Playboy Clubs, and we see the people that go into Playboy Clubs. But, God man, like it's... that's just uh... who wants to go in a Playboy Club, you know?
NH: Yeah. You said, and this is the very last thing, do you think anything can be done by any one person to change anything?
BD: Well I don't know. Like, I used to have spent... I was about to change things, you know. Like, it used to be that for days and days I'd walk around in the same clothes, you know. Nowadays I change clothes, you know, once a day and, you know, if I can possibly get to, I change 'em more. I change 'em more, you know. I think that's a big step.
NH: That's about the...
BD: ...for me.
NH: That's about the one possibility of a change?
BD: That's about the only change I see. The other change is destruction, you know.
NH: And you think that might happen?
BD: Well I don't think it'll happen here. I just don't think people are ready for it, you know. I don't think that... everybody's so destructive as it is that if anybody wants to destroy something there are enough people around to destroy whatever it... destroys, you know.
NH: Yeah.

BD: But if you want to change something, man, well what's all this talking business? If you wanna change something you just... Wham... you just destroy it, you know? Or else don't talk about it.

NH: Or sing about it.

BD: Right.

NH: Thank you very much. You have a lot of patience.

9 October 1965
Ann Carter Interview, Atlanta, Georgia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 995-997.

Ann Carter interviewed Bob just before the show at the Atlanta Auditorium on October 9th 1965. The article appeared the following day in the *Atlanta Journal*.

NOT FOLK SINGER OR LEADER – DYLAN

Bob Dylan, the 24 year old singer-poet described as a 'mythological' – almost legendary – folk leader in his own time, denies that he is either a folk singer or a leader.

"I'm not involved in folk music," Dylan said before his Saturday night concert at the City Auditorium.

"What I do is music. I have a deep respect for it, not necessarily for what's being written today, but for songs about plagues, myths and Bible stories."

"I just listen because I dig them; not because I get anything out of it."

"When I write, I don't try to reach anybody. If someone likes it – or doesn't like it -it doesn't matter."

"I only hold respect for what I write. I don't create my fans, they can take care of themselves."

But a group of around 4,500 young people at City Auditorium Saturday night did 'take care' and applauded Dylan wildly for his performance.

Dylan, who was described by one concertgoer as a 'small-scale Chico Marx', strung verse pictures together in his newest (about six weeks old) song, *Desolation Row*. The song lasted 12 minutes.

The second part of the program, judging from applause, was the most popular. Dylan, still dressed in British-cut grey suit, played an electric guitar and was accompanied by five others.

He concluded the performance with Rolling Stone and took one curtain call, despite shouts of "more".

Some critics say that Dylan, who became well known for his songs like *Blowin' In The Wind*, his nasal, half speaking, singing voice; and his guitar and harmonica playing has grown away from his folk style to rock n' roll.

"I don't play rock n' roll." Dylan said. **"I do play with electricity. I like it. The only reason I didn't do it before is because I couldn't afford it."**

"The Beatles haven't influenced my music or my words. They may've influenced my going to England."

Dylan says he has been to England three times in the past four years, giving concerts first in 'little' and now big hotels. He's met and talked with the Beatles and has admiration for a group called Herman and the Hermits.

"I wouldn't know what to say if I met Herman and the Hermits," Dylan admits. **"I'd probably punch them on the nose. I do that to people I like."**

Asked what kind of music he liked, Dylan answered, **"I like midgets because I can look down on them, and mailmen... and scientists."**

He said people send him lots of letters and he answers them all.

Later, on the subject of people, he denied that they provoked him. **"I like people. People think something's wrong with everything. I don't. I can accept sword swallowers, hunchbacks, girls with one leg... I accept everybody."**

Did he have any personal philosophy? **"I never hide Kleenex from anybody,"** Dylan replied. **"And I always try to keep one eye on the ashtray. The ashtray keeps my head straight."**

"I'm not out to prove anything. I have no point to get across. I'm no messenger, no spokesman. It's not my place. I just do what I do."

He added, however, that he disliked institutions. **"I have no respect for any group that has a president or a vice-president... for any organisation that has a motto. I stay out of it. I don't need it. I live in a world that doesn't exist in politics. I just don't have those problems."**

"If people ever ask me what to do – I can't tell them – they'll kill me. But they have Martin Luther King and President Johnson to tell them what to do now. They don't need me."

"I'm sure you don't understand why I sell records (he has 6 LP's on the market) **or who my followers are. They are people not in the headlines. They are not protestors. I'm not making an attempt to tell anybody that I KNOW what's going on. I really know nothing of what's going on... if you can understand the law of opposites."**

"I don't do stuff like protest the war in Vietnam. Who's somebody to say 'No' to another who wants to fight. When has somebody to fight?" Dylan asked.

"We all have to learn to take care of ourselves. We all have to learn judo to protect ourselves."

15/16 November 1965
Margaret Steen Interview, Toronto, Canada

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 803-808.

This interview took place in Bob's hotel room in the Inn On The Park, Toronto after the Massey Hall concert on either the 15th or 16th of November 1965. Margaret Steen conducted the interview and it was eventually reported in *The Toronto Star Weekly* on January 29, 1966.

Not Bob Dylan! The anguished folkniks would've believed it of anyone else but not of him. Bob Dylan is, for the uninitiated, a mopheaded throaty-voiced 24-year-old folk singer-poet-composer. But not an ordinary folk singer. From 1961 when his melodious *Blowin' in the Wind* asked some important, unanswerable questions about the world and first gained him mass recognition, his visionary lyrics to guitar have made him the spokesman for a whole restless, rebellious generation.

Unlike most musical idols of the young, his ability to handle folk and blues idioms had established him as a major – an original! – talent with even the most highbrow, purist critics; his image-filled verses had won the respect of serious poets. To his fans Bob Dylan means the ultimate in far-out, the untouchable, the incorruptible, the uncompromising – the man who sees through the Image Makers and the Mass Market and the Big Sell.

But what was this at Toronto's Massey Hall? Bob Dylan to an electric music band – boom boom, deafening, cacophony! I mean, you have to call it rock and roll. Bob Dylan, how could you do this to us?

Bob Dylan stares at the cigarette butt he is jamming into an already crowded ashtray, looks resigned but amused.

"A lot of people don't dig it, or say they don't dig it, or tell people not to dig it." (His speaking voice is musical, rises and falls constantly, phrases intensely.) **"It don't matter. It's easy for people to classify it as rock and roll, to put it down. Rock and roll is a straight 12-bar blues progression. My new songs aren't. I used to play rock and roll a long time ago, before I even started playing old-fashioned folk, 10 years ago when I was a kid for God's sake..."**

"Nowadays the music industry is totally different. You know who the rock and roll singers were 10 years ago – Fabian, Ricky Nelson, Bobby Rydell. Rock and roll singers now are a different kind of people; they make the old people look sick."

He picks up a *Toronto Daily Star* folded to a review of his Massey Hall concert the night before. He doesn't usually read much that's written about him, but one of the fellows in the band showed him this one line that really got him; The reviewer said Bob Dylan who once prefaced a song with the announcement that it "wasn't written in Tin Pan Alley, where most of the folk songs come from these days – it was written down in the United States," now belongs to Tin Pan Alley.

"Tin Pan Alley! I know that scene. Fat guys chewing cigars and carrying around gold records, and selling songs, selling talent, selling an image. I never hung out there! Neither did anyone else who is big now. The singers 10 years ago were kids but the old guys ran things; now the people actually in control are younger – the managers, the record company-bosses, kids, in their 20's. Man, these old guys have no idea, they've been left behind and by the time they

figure it out they'll be so old it won't matter. Then the pace was slower, you could sell a 'talent'; now you can't do that, the industry is too big, exposure too great, you can't manufacture an image because sooner or later that image is gonna have to talk."

He runs down like a record when you switch it off without removing the needle, averts his face, embarrassed at having gone on so long. For he is the exception to what he's just said; he doesn't talk. **"Like I write, I don't have to talk,"** he says with a grin when I catch him up on this; and he means it. These days with the Beatles loving press conferences, tossing out one-liners that make great copy, exposing their witty, whimsical selves like verbal pin-ups, Bob Dylan is really unique.

He says he doesn't like giving interviews, doesn't like talking to the press and he really means it. Take this concert tour he's doing with Levon and the Hawks, the Toronto electric-music group he's adopted. If you were a reporter in one of the Canadian or U.S. cities they played, you pestered an entourage of road managers, personal managers, press managers – all kids! in their 20's – and kept getting the polite response, "I'll talk to him and let you know, but I don't think there's much chance. He doesn't like interviews."

He's ill at ease in this interview, one of the few lengthy ones he's ever given. He's sitting beside me on a couch, dressed in an outrageous navy blue shirt with white polka dots and huge billowing sleeves (looking just as he does in pictures, the mop of hair, everything! only more graceful) and somehow making his standard hotel room in Toronto's swanky Inn on the Park seem a world away from the gray flannel conventioneers roaming around the lobby below. He fidgets constantly, keeps twisting his legs up under him and stretching them out again, pushing cigarette butts around the ashtray, sitting bolt upright and slouching back down. I soft of want to reassure him, to quote from his own song.

> I ain't lookin' to compete with you,
> Beat or cheat or mistreat you,
> Simplify you, classify you,
> Deny, defy or crucify you.
> All I really want to do
> Is Baby, befriends with you.

But that would be pretty silly so we keep talking about the New Sound, which has put Dylan records on top of the teen charts in addition to all the high-class prestige symbols he's accumulated; and which is making some purists shriek, "Rock and roll! Sell-out!" and others shriek "Marvelous!" On the concert tour he does the first half of the show by himself, with guitar and harmonica, the social-comment songs that first won him renown and – mostly – the more recent love songs. But then he brings on Levon and the Hawks with their array of electric guitars, electric Fender bass, electric organ and piano and drums. Dylan plays an electric guitar himself! And they do the New Sound. The words are as brilliant, surrealistic, meaningful as ever. But it's harder to hear them. And quite a few folkniks have been booing their one-time idol.

"If they like it or don't like it, that's their business," Bob Dylan tells me gently. **"You can't tell people what to do at a concert. Anyway, paying out $4 for a ticket to come and boo – is anyone groovy gonna do that anyway? Four years ago I used to sing in Village coffee houses, 50 people and they were packed, fire inspectors all over the place, you know? Then I knew my real fans. Now, these concerts, I don't know them, I don't know why they're there. I don't know what they think about when they go away."**

To Bob Dylan the idea of pinning a "folk idiom" and therefore "all right" label on his old songs is as absurd as calling his new songs rock or folk-rock, a distortion of an old form and thus "commercial! a sell-out!" He says, **"It's all music; nothing more, nothing less."** He has no prejudices about music; when he was learning, he soaked up every influence – early Elvis Presley as well as the folkniks' darling, Woody Guthrie, who is said to have had the greatest influence on his work. He is constantly experimenting – and how can you call one experiment more "commercial" than the other? He made as much money on his folk albums as he does on his rock singles, and as for the money **"that's something I haven't come to terms with yet"** anyway. He literally has no idea how much he earns (though associates say it was well over $250,000 last year); he's incorporated so he won't be taxed too brutally, but he leaves all that to business managers, and except for the private plane which taxis him from one concert stand to the next, his life is luxury-less in the conventional "star" sense.

When he first came to the Village from the town of Hibbing, Minnesota, 60 miles from the Ontario border, where he grew up, he did real old-fashioned folk songs – you know, written by the people. Then he said, **"I can't do this. I don't care how pure the song is, or how great its tradition – it don't mean anything to me, today."** So he started singing about stuff that means something to him, today – *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* about the 1962 Cuban missile crisis; *Oxford Town* about the ordeal of James Meredith, the first Negro to enroll in the University of Mississippi; *Blowin' in the Wind* of course – and developed the modern protest song which now, three years later, has spawned scores of imitators, ("the children of Bobby Dylan," *Life* magazine called them recently) and has become the thing in popular music.

But though his words are new he was still writing in old musical forms – and why was this any less artificial than singing dated lyrics? I mean the way-out electronic Space Age sound was the natural next step – electric music is what's happening today, it's sheer 20th-century.

"Before," he says of his first protest songs, leaning forward with one of his rare stares right at me, **"every song had to have a specific point behind it, a person, a thing. I would squeeze a shapeless concept into this artificial shape, like, like..."**

Like *With God on Our Side*, his ironic commentary of three years ago on how people justify fighting, which ends with the lines:

> The words fill my head
> And fall to the floor,
> If God's on our side
> He'll stop the next war.

"Yeah! Yeah! Like that one," says Dylan, excited that I'm catching on to what he means. **"It's a good song, I'm not putting it down; but this thing I wanted to say, I had to jam it into a very timed, rigid stylized pattern."**

"Now!... Well for one thing, the music, the rhyming and rhythm, what I call the mathematics of a song, are more second-nature to me. I used to have to go after a song, seek it out. But now, instead of going to it I stay where I am and let everything disappear and the song rushes to me. Not just the music, the words, too. Those old songs I used to write, everyone is imitating them now. What I'm doing now you can't learn by studying, you can't copy it, someone else can't say he's writing a song 'like that'."

This is true. Lyrics like this from '*Subterranean Homesick Blues*' get the message across all right, but not in a lecture – in a rush of feelings.

Ah get born, keep warm
Short pants, romance, learn to dance
Get dressed, get blessed
Try to be a success.

It's the same with the love songs. Take the girl of whom he sings:

You will start out standing
Proud to steal her anything she sees
But you will wind up peeking through her keyhole
Down upon your knees.

Is she a real girl? He smiles enigmatically. **"She's a lot of real girls. You know girls like that, don't you?"** And, of course, you do, but you would never have thought of describing her quite that way. In an age when love song lyrics must be either terribly flippant and rhymey, or else sheer gibberish, Dylan's evocative imagery may make him the 1960's answer to the romantic poets of the past.

There is silence for a few moments while I think of some of the more intriguing lines from his songs. What, I asked him did he mean by:

Ah, but I was much older then,
I'm younger than that now.

"My God, did I write that line?" He smiles **"I was in my New York phase then, or at least, I was just coming out of it. I was still keeping the things that are really really real out of my songs, for fear they'd be misunderstood. Now,"** with another smile, **"I don't care if they are."**

Like, he had all the answers, then. If we can get rid of the Bomb nobody will fight any more. If we integrate the schools every one will love one another. It was so simple, he was so much older then.

"No, I'm not disillusioned. I'm just not illusioned, either. The civil rights and protest songs, I wrote when nobody else was writing them. Now everyone is. But I've found out some things. The groups promoting these things, the movement, would try to get me involved with them, be their singing spokesman – and inside these groups, with all their president vice-president secretary stuff, it's politics, all politics. Inside their own pettinesses they're as bad as the hate groups. I won't even have a fan club because it'd have to have a president, it'd be a group."

He's wound up now, veering off toward something else that he feels very strongly about.

"They think the more people you have behind something the more influence it has. Maybe so, but the more it gets watered down, too. I'm not a believer in doing things by numbers. I believe that the best things get done by individuals. Back when I used to play in the rock and roll bands I used to get in these hang-ups on the group, the lowest common denominator. I knew I couldn't make it that way. So I discovered folk, and sang by myself."

But now he's back to playing with a group again...

"Yes but we play my songs."

As always when he works himself up to a pitch about something he's saying, his mood breaks visibly, and he sinks down into his seat with a look of resignation, trying to expand a bit more but not really interested: **"It's different now, there aren't the same hang-ups as with a bunch just starting out... But it don't matter. If I weren't sleeping here in the Inn on the Park, so I'd be sleeping off in some alleyway somewhere."**

Again, it's like a line from one of his songs:

> There's no success like failure
> and... failure's no success at all

But what does it really mean? He smiles that faraway, enigmatic smile again **"When you've tried to write this story about me if you're any good you'll feel you've failed. But when you've tried and failed, and tried and failed – then you'll have something."**

"Look." He's sitting up again, intense, eyes bright. **"If I met you in a bar somewhere, or even at a party, I could tell you more, we could talk better, I know it. But you're a reporter, you're here for your interview – and where will it all get either of us? Nothing will happen. You're not even writing this story under your own conditions. And how much can you say? How much room would you have to say it in, even if you could say it?"**

"Look. I'm sorry. I know you couldn't get everything, but you did get something didn't you?"

Yes Oh, yes, and thanks. I know he doesn't like talking to reporters, and I really appreciate it...

He is saying goodbye, across a great gulf, already weighing the experience that isn't quite over yet, probably deciding it was useless but weighing it just the same, face blank, but eyes giving him away, the mind behind them whirring away like crazy. I can understand how he could say, as he did earlier when I asked him about material for songs, **"Why man, just with the experiences I've experienced already, I could never step outside this room again and still write songs until the end of time."**

19 November 1965
Stage comments,
Veterans' Memorial Auditorium, Columbus, Ohio

Source: *TWM* #1006A

The 19 November 1965 Columbus, Ohio, concert took place at the Veterans' Memorial Auditorium and the only songs known to have been done there are: *She Belongs To Me*, *Baby Blue*, and *Desolation Row*. Between almost every song in the first half, Dylan retuned his guitar, saying at one point, **"My electric guitar never goes out of tune"**.

26 November 1965
Joseph Hass Interview, Chicago, Illinois

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 315-318.

Joseph Hass of the *Chicago Daily News* interviewed Dylan on November 26th 1965 before the first of his two concerts at the Chicago Arie Crown Theater. The article appeared in the Panorama section of the November 27th edition of the *Chicago Daily News*.

Bob Dylan, one of the most talented and controversial figures in American entertainment, will perform tonight in the second of two concerts in Arie Crown Theater of McCormick Place. When the twenty-four year old performer sings his original compositions, in his highly distinctive way, millions of young people listen – at concerts and on his best-selling long-playing albums and single recordings. Wise parents, who want to understand what the younger generation is thinking, would do well to listen to him, too. Dylan is a difficult performer to classify. Is he a protest singer, leader of the folk-rock cult, a rock n' roller, or a natural progression in American folk music? He has been called all of these things, and perhaps the wisest course is not to try to classify him at all, but to let him speak for himself, at length and informally.

JH: Will you sing any of the so-called folk-rock music in your concerts here?

BD: No, it's not folk-rock, it's just instruments... it's not folk-rock. I call it the mathematical sound, sort of Indian music. I can't really explain it.

JH: Do you dislike folk-rock groups?

BD: No, no, I like what everybody else does, what a lot of people do. I don't necessarily like the writing of too many songwriters but I like the idea of, look, like they're trying to make it, you know, to say something about the death thing. Actually I don't know many of them. I'm twenty-four now and most of them playing and listening are teenagers. I was playing rock n' roll when I was thirteen and fourteen and fifteen, but I had to quit when I was sixteen or seventeen because I couldn't make it that way. The image of the day was Frankie Avalon or Fabian or this whole athletic supercleanness bit, you know, which if you don't have that, you couldn't make any friends. I played rock n' roll when I was in my teens. Yeah, I played semi-professionally, piano with rock n' roll groups. About 1958 or 1959, I discovered Odetta, Harry Belafonte, that stuff, and I became a folk singer.

JH: Did you make this change so you could "make it"?

BD: You couldn't make it liveable back then with rock n' roll. You couldn't carry around an amplifier and electric guitar and expect to survive, it was just too much of a hang-up. It cost bread to make enough money to buy an electric guitar, and then you had to make more money to have enough people to play the music. You need two or three to create some conglomeration of sound. So it wasn't an alone kind of thing, you know. When you got other things dragging you down, you're sort of beginning to lose, crash, you know? when somebody's sixteen or twenty-five, who's got the right to lose, to wind up as a pinboy at sixty-five?

JH: By "making it", do you mean making commercial success?

BD: No, no, that's not it, making money. It's being able to be nice and not hurt anybody.

JH: How does your sound differ today?

BD: It differs because it doesn't. I don't know, you see. I don't know exactly what to say rock n' roll is. I do know that... think of it in terms of a whole thing. It's not just pretty words to a tune or putting tunes to words, there's nothing that's exploited. The words and the music, I can hear the sound of what I want to say.

JH: Did you go into the folk field, then, because you had a better chance of "making it"?

BD: No, that was an accidental thing. I didn't go into folk music to make any money, but because it was easy. You could be by yourself, you didn't need anybody. All you needed was a guitar. You didn't need anybody else at all. I don't know what's happened to it now. I don't think it's as good as it used to be. Most of the folk music singers have gone on, they're doing other things. Although they're still a lot of good ones around.

JH: Why did you give up the folk sound?

BD: I've been on too many other streets to just do that. I couldn't go back and do just that. The real folk never seen Forty-Second Street, they've never ridden an airplane. They've got their little world, and that's fine.

JH: Why have you begun using the electric guitar?

BD: I don't use it that much really.

JH: Some people are hurt because you've used one at all.

BD: That's their fault. It would be silly of me to say I'm sorry because I haven't really done anything. It's not really all that serious. I have a hunch the people who feel I betrayed them picked up on me a few years ago and weren't really back there with me at the beginning. Because I still see the people who were with me from the beginning once in a while and they know what I'm doing.

JH: Can you explain why you were booed at the Newport Folk Festival last summer when you came on stage with an electric guitar and began singing your new material?

BD: Like, I don't even know who those people were. Anyway, I think there's always a little boo in all of us. I wasn't shattered by it. I didn't cry. I don't even understand it. I mean, what are they going to shatter, my ego? And it doesn't even exist, they can't hurt me with a boo.

JH: What will you do when the success of your present kind of music fades?

BD: I'm going to say when I stop, it just doesn't matter to me. I've never followed any trend. It's useless to even try.

JH: In songs like *The Times They Are A-Changin'* you made a distinction between young and old thinking. You talked about the older generation failing to understand the younger?

BD: That's not what I was saying. It happened maybe that those were the only words I could find to separate aliveness from deadness. It has nothing to do with age.

JH: What can you say about when your first book is coming out?

BD: Macmillan is the publisher, and the title now is *Tarantula*. Right now it's called that but I might change it. It's just a lot of writings I can't really say what it's about. It's not a narrative or anything like that.

JH: Some stories have said that you plan to give up music, perhaps soon, and devote your time to writing?

BD: When I really get wasted, I'm gonna have to do something, you know. Like I might never write again. I might start painting soon.

JH: Have you earned enough money to have freedom to do exactly what you want?

BD: I wouldn't say that. You got to get up and you got to go to sleep, and the time in between there you got to do something. That's what I'm dealing with now. I do a Jot of funny things. I really have no idea, I can't afford to think about tonight, tomorrow, any time. It's really meaningless to me.

JH: Do you live from day to day?

BD: I try to. I try not to make any plans. Every time I go and make plans, nothing really seems to work. I've given up on most of that stuff. I have a concert schedule I keep, but other people get me there. I don't have to do anything.

JH: Do you ever hope to settle down to a normal life, get married, have kids?

BD: I don't hope to be like anybody. Getting married, having a bunch of kids, I have no hopes for it. If it happens, it happens. Whatever my hopes, it never turns out. I don't think anybody's a prophet.

JH: You sound quite pessimistic about everything.

BD: No, not pessimistic. I don't think things can turn out. That's all, and I've accepted it. It doesn't matter to me. It's not pessimism, just a sort of sadness, sort of like not having no hopes.

JH: What about religion or philosophy?

BD: I just don't have any religion or philosophy. I can't say much about any of them. A lot of people do, and fine if they really do follow a certain code. I'm not about to go around changing anything. I don't like anybody to tell me what I have to do or believe, how I have to live. I just don't care, you know. Philosophy can't give me anything that I don't already have. The biggest thing of all, that encompasses it all, is kept back in this country. It's an old Chinese philosophy and religion, it really was one... There is a book called the *I Ching*, I'm not trying to push it, I don't want to talk about it, but it's the only thing that is amazingly true, period, not just for me. Anybody would know it. Anybody that ever walks would know it. It's a whole system of finding out things, based on all sorts of things. You don't have to believe in anything to read it, because besides being a great book to believe in it's also very fantastic poetry.

JH: How do you spend your time when you're not on a concert tour?

BD: I keep a regular bunch of hours. I just do what I have to do, not doing nothing really. I can be satisfied anywhere. I never read too much. Once in a while I write up a bunch of things, and then I record them. I do the normal things.

JH: What about romantic reports about you and Joan Baez?

BD: Oh, man, no, that was a long time ago.

JH: On her latest album, about half of her songs are Dylan songs.

BD: Heaven help her.

JH: What about the story that you changed your name from Bob Zimmerman to Bob Dylan because you admired the poetry of Dylan Thomas?

BD: No, God, no. I took the Dylan because I have an uncle named Dillon. I changed the spelling but only because it looked better. I've read some of Dylan Thomas' stuff, and it's not the same as mine. We're different.

JH: What about your family?

BD: Well, I just don't have any family, I'm all alone.

JH: What about a story that you invited your parents to one of your early concerts, paid their way there, and then when they were seated, you said on stage that you were an "orphan", and then didn't visit them when they were in New York.

BD: That's not true. They came to a concert, they drove there on their own, and I gave them some money. I don't dislike them or anything, I just don't have any contact with them. They live in Minnesota and there's nothing for me in Minnesota. Probably sometime I'd like to go back for awhile. Everybody goes back to where they came from, I guess.

JH: You talk as if you are terribly separated from people.

BD: I'm not disconnected from anything because of a force, just habit. It's just the way I am. I don't know, I have an idea that it's easier to be disconnected than to be connected. I've got a huge Hallelujah for all the people who're connected, that's great, but I can't do that. I've been connected so many times. Things haven't worked out right, so rather than break myself up, I just don't get connected.

JH: Are you just trying to avoid being hurt again?

BD: I haven't been hurt at the time, the realization is afterwards. Just looking back on it, thinking about it, it's just like a cold winter.

JH: Do you avoid close relationships with people?

BD: I have relationships with people. People like me, also disconnected, there are a lot of disconnected people. I don't feel alienated, or disconnected, or afraid. I don't feel there's any kind of organization of disconnected people. I just can't go along with any kind of organization. Some day I might find myself alone in a subway car, stranded when the lights go out, with forty people, and I'll have to get to know them. Then I'll just do what has to be.

3 December 1965
San Francisco Press Conference, San Francisco, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 359-374.

The San Francisco Press Conference was set up by Ralph Gleason at KQED-TV, an educational station, in the bay area of San Francisco and took place on December 3rd 1965. It was broadcast on KQED later that day, just before Dylan and The Hawks played their first night at the Berkeley Community Theater. The Press Conference proceedings were published in *Rolling Stone* and later in the *Rolling Stone* book *Talking With The Legends of Rock And Roll*. The conference is to be found on vinyl and CD where there are, in parts, major differences from the Rolling Stone transcript. I've used the CD as my source, checking a few points out on the vinyl as well.

The cheekiest of all the questions, perhaps, – "Can you ever envisage being hung as a thief" was posed by Allen Ginsberg who was in the audience.

The following introduction is from Gleason himself and is taken from the *Legends* article.

When Bob Dylan's five concerts in the San Francisco Bay Area were scheduled in December 1965, the idea was proposed that he hold a press conference in the studios of KQED, the educational television station.

Dylan accepted and flew out a day early to make it.

He arrived early for the press conference, accompanied by Robbie Robertson and several other members of his band, drank tea in the KQED offices and insisted that he was ready to talk about **"anything you want to talk about"**. His only request was that he be able to leave at three p.m. so that he could rehearse in the Berkeley Community Theater where he was to sing that night.

At the press conference there were all sorts of people. The TV news crews of all the local stations were there; so were reporters for three metropolitan dailies (their stories were subsequently compared to the broadcast of the interview by a University of California journalism class), plus representatives of several high school papers; and personal friends of Dylan including poet Allen Ginsberg, producer Bill Graham and comedian Larry Hankin.

Thus the questions ranged from standard straight press and TV reporters questions to teenage fan club questions, to in-group personal queries and put-ons, to questions by those who really had listened to Dylan's songs.

He sat on a raised platform, facing the cameras and the reporters and answered questions over a microphone, all the while smoking cigarettes and swinging his leg back and forth. At one point he held up a poster for a benefit that week for the San Francisco Mime Troupe (the first rock dance at the Fillmore Auditorium and one of the first public dances featuring the Jefferson Airplane). At the conclusion of the press conference, he chatted with friends for a while, jumped into a car and went back to Berkeley for a rehearsal. He cut the rehearsal off early to go to the hotel and watch the TV program which was shown that night.

I'd like to know about the cover of your forthcoming, er... album, the, er... the one with... and some blues in it. I'd like to know about the meaning of it and the Triumph T-shirt.

BD: What would you want to know about it?

Well I'd like to know if that's an equivalent photograph. It means something; it's got a philosophy in it. I'd like to know visually what it represents to you – because you're a part of it.

BD: Um. I haven't really looked at it that much.

I've thought about it a great deal.

BD: It was just taken one day when I was sittin' on the steps, y'know... I don't really remember too much about it.

Well, what about the motorcycle was an image in your song writing? You seem to like that.

BD: Oh, we all like motorcycles to some degree.

I do.

Do you think of yourself primarily as a singer or as a poet?

BD: Oh, I think of myself more as a song and dance man, y'know.

What?

BD: A song and dance man.

Why?

BD: Oh, I don't think we have enough time to really go into that.

You were quoted in the *Chicago Daily News* as saying that when you're really wasted you may enter into another field. How "wasted" is really wasted, and do you foresee it?

BD: No, I don't foresee it, but it's more or less a ruthless type of feeling. Very ruthless and intoxicated to some degree.

The criticism that you've received for more-or-less leaving folk for folk-rock hasn't seemed to bother you very much. Do you think you'll stick with folk-rock or are you going on into more writing?

BD: I don't play folk-rock.

What would you call your music?

BD: I would call it... urn... I like to think of it more in terms of vision music... it's mathematical music.

Would you say that the words were more important than the music?

BD: Er, the words are just as important as the music. There would be no music without the words.

Which do you do first, ordinarily?

BD: Er, the words.

Do you think there will ever be a time when you will paint or sculpt?

BD: Oh, yes. Oh sure.

Do you think there will ever be a time when you'll be hung as a thief?

BD: You weren't supposed to say that. Do we have a match?

Bob you said you always do your words first and think of it as music. When you do the words can you hear it?

BD: Yes!

Can you hear what sort of music you want when you do your words?

BD: Yes, Oh Yes!

Do you hear any music before you have words?... Do you have any songs that you don't have words to yet?

BD: Umm, sometimes, on very general instruments, not on the guitar though... maybe something like the harpsichord or the harmonica or autoharp... I might hear some kind of melody or tune which I would know the words to put to. Not with guitar though. The guitar is too hard an instrument. I don't really hear many melodies based on the guitar.

Do you sit down just to write a song or do you... on inspiration?

BD: I more or less write it on a lot of things.

What poets do you dig?

BD: Oh, Rimbaud, I guess. W. C. Fields. The Family, you know, the trapeze family in the circus; Smokey Robinson, Allen Ginsberg, Charlie Rich... he's a good poet.

In a lot of your songs you are hard on a lot of people... in *Like A Rolling Stone* you're hard on the girl and in *Positively Fourth Street* you're pretty hard on a supposed friend. Are you hard on them because you want to torment them or because you want to change their lives, to make them notice.

BD: I want to needle them.

Do you still sing your older songs?

BD: No. No. I just saw a songbook last night; I don't really see too many of those things, but there's a lotta songs in those books I haven't even recorded, you know. I've just written down, you know, and put little tunes to them and they published them. I haven't sung them though. A lotta the songs I just don't even know anymore, even the ones I did sing. There doesn't seem to be enough time, y'know.

Did you change your program when you went to England?

BD: No, no, I finished it there. That was the end of my older program. I didn't change it, it was all, it was more or less... I knew what was going to happen all the time, y'know. I knew how many encores there was, y'know, which songs they were going to clap loudest and all these kind of things.

On a concert tour like this do you do the same program night after night?

BD: Oh, sometimes it's different. I think we'll do the same one here in this area though.

Did you, in England, do any of the songs like *Subterranean*?

BD: No, I didn't work with the Band then.

Would you be working with the Band here?

BD: Oh yeah.

(Some unheard comment from the floor) BD: Thank you very much.

In a recent Broadside interview Phil Ochs said you should do films. Do you have any plans to do this?

BD: No, I don't... I do have plans to make a film but not because anybody said I should do them.

How soon will this be?

BD: Next year probably.

Can you tell us what it will be about?

BD: It'll just be another song.

Who are the people making films that you dig, particularly?

BD: Truffaut. I really can't think of any more people. Italian movie directors, y'know, but not too many people in England and the United States particularly who I really think that I would dig.

You did a Charlie Chaplin bit as an exit line in a concert once.

BD: I did!?! That must've been an accident. Have to stay away from that kind of thing.

(Various aside comments concerning a polaroid picture given him about which he comments)

BD: Good God. I must leave right away.

What do you think of people that analyze your songs? Do they usually end up with the same meaning that you wrote, or...

BD: I welcome them... with open arms.

The University of California mimeographed the lyrics to all the songs on the last album and
had a symposium discussing them. Do you welcome that?

BD: Oh sure. I'm just kinda sad I'm not around to be a part of it, but...

It'd be pretty wild if you had been.

BD: Yes.

Mr. Dylan. Josh Dunson in his new book *Freedom In The Air* implies that you have sold out to commercial interests and the topical song movement. Do you have any comments, sir?

BD: Well, no comments, no arguments. No, I sincerely don't feel guilty.

If you were going to sell out to a commercial interest, which one would you choose?

BD: Ladies' garments.

Bob, have you worked with any rock n' roll groups?

BD: Uh, professionally?

Or just sitting in or on concert tours with them, or sitting in on their sessions.

BD: No, no, I don't usually play too much.

Do you listen to other peoples recordings of your songs?

BD: Sometimes. A few of them I've heard. I don't really make it, I don't really come across it that much though, so...

Is it a strange experience?

BD: No, it's like a, more or less like a heavenly kind of thing.

What do you think of Joan Baez' interpretations of your earlier songs?

BD: Er, you mean the one's she... I haven't heard her latest album, or her one before that. I heard one. She does 'em all right, I think.

What about Donovan's *Colours* and his things?

BD: What do I think of Donovan's *Colours*?

Do you think he's a good poet of love ballads?

BD: No. He's a nice guy though.

I'm shattered.

BD: Well you needn't be.

Are there any young folk singers or rock groups that you would recommend for us to hear?

BD: I'm glad you asked that. Oh, yeah, there's the Sir Douglas Quintet, I think are probably the best that are gonna have a chance of reaching commercial airways. They already have with a couple of songs.

What about Paul Butterfield?

BD: They're good.

Mr. Dylan, you call yourself a completely disconnected person. Would you like to...

BD: No. I don't call myself that. They sort of drove those words in my mouth. I saw that paper.

How would you describe yourself? What is it that you, you... have you analyzed why you appeal to people?

BD: I certainly haven't. No.

Mr. Dylan, I know you dislike labels and probably rightfully so, but for those of us who are well over thirty, could you label yourself and perhaps tell us what your role is?

BD: Well, I'd sort of label myself as "well under thirty." And my role is to, y'know, to just stay here as long as I can.

Phil Ochs wrote something in *Broadside* magazine to the effect that you have twisted so many people's wigs that he feels it becomes increasingly dangerous for you to perform in public before an audience.

BD: Well, that's the way it goes, you know. I don't, I can't apologize, certainly.

Did you envision the time when you would give five concerts in one area like this within ten days?

BD: No, no. This is all very new to me.

If you were draftable at present, do you have any feelings of what your actions might be?

BD: No, I'd probably just do what had to be done.

What would that be?

BD: Well, I don't know, I never really speak in terms of "what if, y'know, so I don't really know.

You're considered by many people to be symbolic of the protest movement in the country, by the young people. Are you going to participate in the Vietnam Day Committee demonstration in front of the Fairmont Hotel tonight?

BD: No, I'll be busy tonight.

You planning any demonstration?

BD: Well, we thought of one. I don't know if it could be organized in time.

Would you describe it?

BD: Uh... well, it was a demonstration where I make up the cards, you know; they have... uh... they have a group of protesters here... uh... perhaps carrying cards with pictures of the jack of diamonds on them and the ace of spades on them. Pictures of mules, maybe words and... oh, maybe about 25-30,000 of these things printed up and just picket, carry signs and picket in front of the post office.

What words?

BD: Oh, words – camera, microphone, loose – just words, names of some famous people.

Do you consider yourself a politician?

BD: Do I consider myself a politician? Oh, I guess so. I have my own party though.

Does it have a name?

BD: No. There's no presidents in the party... there's no presidents, or vice-presidents, or secretaries or anything like that, so it makes it kinda hard to get in.

Is there any right wing or left wing in the party?

BD: No. It's more or less in the center... kind of on the uppity scale.

Do you think your party could end the war with China?

BD: Uh... I don't know. I don't know if they would have any people over there that would be in the same kind of party. Y'know? So it might be kind of hard to infiltrate. I don't think my party would ever be approved by the White House or anything like that.

Is there anyone else in your party?

BD: No. Most of us don't even know each other, y'know. It's hard to tell who's in it and who's not in it.

Would you recognize them if you see them?

BD: Oh, you can recognize the people when you see them

Are there still tickets available for your concerts...

BD: I don't know, I would imagine so.

How long do you think before you finally quit?

BD: Gee, I don't know. I could answer that, you know, but it would mean something different probably for everybody, so we want to keep away from those kind of sayings.

What did you mean when you said...

BD: I don't know, what things were we talking about?

You said, "I don't think things can turn out on a..."

BD: No, no, no... it's not that I don't think things can turn out. I don't think anything you plan ever turns out the way you plan it. That's all.

Is that your philosophy?

BD: No, no. Doesn't mean anything.

Do you think that it's fun to put on an audience?

BD: I don't know. I've never done it.

You wrote a song called *Baby You Been On My Mind*. You didn't record it, right? Do you sing it in concert? Have you?

BD: No I haven't. No I haven't.

Are the concerts fun still?

BD: Yeah. Concerts are much more fun than they used to be.

Do you consider them more important than your albums, for instance?

BD: No. It's just a kick to do it now. The albums are the most important.

Because they reach the people?

BD: No, because it's all concise, it's very concise, and it's easy to hear the words and everything. There's no chance of the sound interfering, whereas in a concert, we've played some concerts where sometimes they have those very bad halls. You know, microphone systems. So it's not that easy for somebody to come and just listen to a band as if they were listening to one person, you know.

Will you make all those lyrics of songs available in a book sometime?

BD: Oh yeah. They all are.

You say you no longer sing your older songs. Do you consider your old songs less valid than the ones you are putting out now?

BD: No, I just consider them something else to themselves; you know, for you know, for another time, another dimension. It would be kind of dishonest for me to sing them now, because I wouldn't really feel like singing them.

What is the strangest thing that ever happened to you?

BD: You're gonna get it, man.

What is the weirdest thing that ever happened to you?

BD: I'll talk to you about it, later. I wouldn't do that to you.

What areas in music that you haven't gotten into do you hope to get into?

BD: Er, writing symphony... with different melodies and different words, different ideas... all being the same, which just roll on top of each other and underneath each other.

Mr. Dylan, when will you know that it is time to get out of the music field and into another field?

BD: When I get very dragged.

When you stop making money?

BD: No. When my teeth get better... or, y'know, God, when something makes a drastic... uh... when I start to itch, y'know? When something just goes to a terrifying turn and I know it's got nothing to do with anything and it's time to leave.

You say you would like to write symphonia. Is this in terms that we think of symphonies?

BD: I'm not sure. Well, songs which are all written as a part of a symphony... different melodies, different changes... with words or without them, you know, but the end result being a total... I mean they say my songs are long now, y'know; sometimes it's just gonna come up with the one that's gonna be, you know, one whole album, consisting of one song. I don't know who's going to buy it. That might be the time to leave.

What's the longest song you've recorded?

BD: I don't know. I don't really check those things, they just turn out long. I guess I've recorded one about eleven or twelve minutes long. *Hollis Brown* was pretty long on my second record and *With God On Or Side* was kind of long. But none of them, I don't think, there's words, there's much into anything as *Desolation Row* was, and that was long, too. Songs shouldn't seem long, y'know. It just so happens that it looks that way on paper, that's all. The length of it doesn't have anything to do with it.

But what happens if they have to cut a song in half like *Subterranean Homesick Blues*?

BD: They didn't have to cut that in half.

They didn't have to, but they did.

BD: No, they didn't.

Yeah?

BD: No. You're talking about *Like A Rolling Stone*.

Oh, yeah.

BD: Oh, they cut it in half for the disc jockeys. Well, you see, that song, it didn't matter for the disc jockeys if they had it cut in half because the other side was just a continuation on the other side, and if anybody was interested they could just turn it over and listen to what really happens, you know. But, we just made a song the other day which came out ten minutes long, and I thought of releasing it as a single, but there was... they would have easily released it and cut it up but it wouldn't have worked that way, so we're not going to turn it out as a single. Its called *Freeze Out*, you know. You'll hear it on the next album.

Of all the people who record your compositions, who do you feel does most justice to what you're trying to say?

BD: I think Manfred Mann. Manfred Mann. They've done the songs, they've done about three or four. Each one of them has been right in context with what the song was all about.

What's your new book about?

BD: Oh, it's about, uh... just about all kinds of different things... rats, balloons. They're about the only things that come to my mind right now.

Is that the same book by MacMillan?

BD: Yes, yes.

(Indecipherable question)

BD: No, I don't really do many of them. I wouldn't do it if I was oppressed or depressed... there's nothing wrong... it seems kinda silly up here...

Mr. Dylan, how would you define folk music?

BD: As a constitutional replay of mass production.

Would you call your songs "folk songs"?

BD: No. No.

Are protest songs "folk songs"?

BD: I guess, if they're a constitutional replay of mass production.

Do you prefer songs with a subtle or obvious message?

BD: With a what?

A subtle or obvious message?

BD: Uh... I don't really prefer those kind of songs at all... "message"... you mean like... what songs with a message?

Well like *Eve Of Destruction* and things like that.

BD: Do I prefer that to what?

I don't know, but your songs are supposed to have a subtle message.

BD: Subtle message?

Well, they're supposed to.

BD: Where'd you hear that?
In a movie magazine.
BD: Oh... oh, God! Well, we won't... we don't discuss those things here.
Are your songs ever about real people, like occasional poetry?
BD: Sure, they are, they're all about real people.
Particular ones?
BD: Particular people? Sure, I'm sure you've seen all the people in my songs at one time or another.
Who's Mr. Jones?
BD: Mr. Jones, I'm not going to tell you his first name. I'd get sued.
What does he do for a living?
BD: He's a pin boy. He also wears suspenders.
How do you explain your attraction?
BD: Attraction to what?
Your attraction... your popularity... your mass popularity.
BD: No, no. I really have no idea. That's the truth, I always tell the truth. That is the truth.

What are your own personal hopes for the future, and what do you hope to change in the world?
BD: Oh, my hopes for the future. To be honest, you know, I don't have any hopes for the future, and I just hope to have enough boots to be able to change them. That's all, really, it doesn't boil down to anything more than that. If it did, I would certainly tell you.

What do you think of a question and answer session of this type, with you as the principal subject?
BD: Well, I think we all have different... uh... I may have dropped an ash on myself somewhere... you'll see in a minute here... I'm not going to say anything about it though... uh... what was the question?
What are you thinking about right now?
BD: I'm thinking about this ash.
Right before that.
BD: Uh... the ash is creeping up on me somewhere... I've lost... lost touch with myself, so I can't tell exactly where it is.
Was that an inadvertent evading of the question?
BD: No, no...
What do you feel about the meaning of this kind of question and answer session?
BD: I just know in my mind that we all have a different idea of all the words we're using... uh... y'know, so I don't really have too much... I really can't take it too seriously because everything... like if I say the word "house"... like we're both going to see a different house. If I just say the word right? So we're using all these other words like "mass production" and "movie magazine" and we all have a different idea of these words, too, so I don't even know what we're saying here.
Is it pointless?
BD: No, it's not pointless. It's... you know, if you want to do it, you're there... then that's not pointless. You know, it doesn't hurt me any.
Is there anything in addition to your songs that you want to say to people?
BD: Good luck.
You don't say that in your songs anywhere do you?
BD: Oh, yes I do. Every song tails off with, "Good luck, I hope you make it."

Why couldn't you... uh... most of what you say...
BD: Who are you? (Laughter) **Get the camera on this person here.**

What do you bother to write the poetry for if we all get different images? If we don't know what you're talking about.

BD: Because I got nothing else to do, man.

Do you have a rhyme for "orange"?

BD: What, I didn't hear that.

A rhyme for "orange."

BD: A-ha... just a rhyme for "orange"?

Is it true you were censored for singing on the *Ed Sullivan Show*?

BD: I'll tell you the rhyme in a minute.

Did they censor you for singing what you wanted to on the *Ed Sullivan Show*?

BD: Yes. It was a long time ago.

What did you want to sing?

BD: I don't know. It was some song which I wanted to sing and they said I could sing. There's more to it than just censorship there. They actually said I could sing the song, but when we went through the rehearsal of it, the guy came back afterwards and said that I'd have to change it, and he said, "Can't you sing some folk song like the Clancy Brothers do?" And I didn't know any of their songs, and so I couldn't get on the program. That's the way it came down to.

Have you found that the text of the interviews with you which have been published are accurate to the original conversations?

BD: No, no. That's another reason I don't really give press interviews or anything, because, you know, I mean, even if you do something... there are a lot of people here, so they know what's going on... but like if you just do it with one guy or a few guys, they just take it all out of context, you know, they just take it, split it up in the middle or just take what they want to use, and they even ask you a question and you answer it and then it comes out in print that they just substitute another question for your answer. That makes you just sound like the way... It's not really truthful, you know, to do that kind of thing, so I just don't do it. That's just a press problem there.

Do you think the entire text of your news conference today should be printed in the newspaper?

BD: Oh, no, nothing like that. But this is just for the interviews you know, when they do want interviews in places like Omaha, or in Cincinnati, man, you know. I don't do it, and then they write bad things.

Well, isn't this partly because you are often inaudible? Like, for most of this dialogue or monologue you have been inaudible, and now when you are touched personally by the misquotation, your voice rises and we can hear you.

BD: Yeah, well, I just realized that maybe the people in the back there can't hear me, that's all.

I was gonna ask you whether, you know... in your songs, you sing out...

BD: Yes, I do.

And whether...

BD: Well, the songs are what I do. You see, the songs are what I do... is write the songs and sing them and perform them. That's what I do. The performing part of it could end, but, like I'm going to be writing these songs and singing them and records for, and I see no end, right now. That's what I do... uh... anything else interferes with it. I mean anything else trying to get on top of it, making something out of it which it isn't, it just brings me down, and it's not, it's not, uh... it just makes it seem all very cheap.

Well, it made me feel like you were almost doing kind of penance of silence here...

BD: No, no.

For the first part, no.

BD: I'm not one of those kinds of people at all.

You don't need silence?
BD: No, no silence. It's always silent where I am.

Mr Dylan, when you're on a concert tour, how many people travel in your party? Do you travel alone, or... ?
BD: We travel with about twelve people now.
Do the number of people seem to go with the amount of money you're making?
BD: Uh, I didn't hear that.
Do the number of people seem to increase as you make more money?
BD: Oh, yes. Of course.
Is that known as Dylan's law? Why do you need so many people when you travel on...
BD: Well, we have the band, we have five in the group. And we need other things. We have to... it's a lot of electronic equipment now, a lot of different things which have to be taken care of, so we need a lot of people. We have three road managers and things like that. We don't make any big public presentations, though, like we never come into town in limousines or anything like that. We just... uh... go from place to place, you know, and do the shows. That's all.

You fly in your own plane? Do you have a private plane?
BD: Yes. yes.

Do you have to get in a certain kind of mood to write your music?
BD: Uh, yeah, I guess so. A certain type of mood, if you want to call it that.
Do you find that you are more creative at a certain time of day?
BD: Yes, yes, I feel that way.
Like a night writer?
BD: I would say night has nothing to do with it.

Have you ever sung with the Beatles?
BD: No, no. Well, I think we may have messed around in London, but no, I don't think anything serious.

Have you ever played a dance?
BD: No, it's not that kind of music.
It is.
BD: Well, what can I say? You must know more about the music then than I do. How long have you been playing it?
Do you find that when you're writing, that you sort of free-associate often?
BD: No, it's all very clear and simple to me. These songs aren't complicated to me at all. I know what they are all about. There's nothing hard to figure out for me. I wouldn't write anything I can't really see.
I don't mean it that way. I meant that when you're creating a song, are you doing it on a sort of subliminal level, where you're letting you're mind just flow?
BD: No, my minds like that whether... or not...
You're very conscious of each step, each word.
BD: No, no. That's the difference in the songs I write now. In the past year or so... in the last year and a half, maybe two, I don't know... but the songs before, up till one of these records... I don't know. I wrote the fourth record in Greece... there was a change there... but the records before that, I used to know what I wanted to say, before I used to write the song, you see. All the stuff which I had written before which wasn't song was just on a piece of, you know, toilet paper. When it comes out like that it's the kind of stuff I never would sing because you know, I know people would just not be ready for it. But I just went through the other thing of writing songs so, and I couldn't write

like it anymore. It was just too easy, and it wasn't really "right". I would start out, I would know what I wanted to say before I wrote the song and I would say it, you know, and it would never really come out exactly that way I thought it would, but it came out, you know, it touched it, you know, but now, I just write a song, you know, like I know that it's just going to be all right, you know, and I don't really know exactly what it's all about, but I do know the minutes and the layers of what it's all about.

What did you think about your song, *It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)*? It happens to be my favorite one.

BD: God bless you son. I haven't heard it for a long time. I couldn't even sing it for you, probably.

How long does it take you to write a...

BD: Uh, usually not too long a time, really. I might write all night and get one song out of a lot of different things I write.

How many songs have you written?

BD: How many have I written? Uh... I guess, well, there's one publisher that's got about a hundred. I've written about fifty others, I guess. I got about 150 songs I've written.

Have they all been published?

BD: Well, no. Just... no. Some of the scraps haven't been published. But I find I can't really sing that anyway, because I forget it, you know, so the songs I don't publish, I usually do forget.

Have you ever taken these scraps, as you call them, and make them into copied songs?

BD: No. I've forgotten the scraps. I have to start over all the time. I can't really keep notes or anything like that.

You can't go back to one of your earlier things and use it in your...

BD: No, no. That wouldn't be right either.

(Indecipherable question)

BD: Yes, it happens, you know. That was a very... are you the same cat that was sitting over there?

On your songs, do you get any help from the rest of your entourage?

BD: What?

Do you get any help from the group that you play with... that you write your songs...

BD: Robbie, the lead guitar player, sometimes we play the guitars together... something might come up... but I know it's going to be right. I'll be just sitting around playing so I can write up some words. I don't get any ideas, though, any kind of ideas... of what I want to, you know, or what's really going to happen here.

Why do you think you're so popular?

BD: I don't know. I'm not a reporter. I'm not a newsman or anything. I'm not even a philosopher, so I have no idea. I would think other people would know, but I don't think I know. You know, when you get too many people talking about the same thing it tends to clutter up things, so I just... Everybody asks me that, so I realize they must be talking about it, so I'd rather stay out of it and make it easier for them. Then, when they get the answer, I hope they tell me.

Has there been any more booing when you played electric guitar?

BD: Oh, there's booing... you can't tell where the booings going to come up. Can't tell at all. It comes up in the weirdest, strangest places, and when it comes up it's quite a thing in itself. I figure there's a little "boo" in all of us.

Bob, where is Desolation Row?

BD: Where? Oh, that's someplace in Mexico. It's across the border. It's noted for it's coke factory. Coca-Cola machines are... sells -... sell a lotta Coca-Cola down there.

Where is Highway 61?

BD: Highway 61, it exists... that's out in the middle of the country. It runs down to the south, goes up north.

Mr Dylan, you seem very reluctant to talk about the fact that you're a popular entertainer... a most popular entertainer.

BD: Well, what do you want me to say?

Well, I don't understand why you...

BD: Well, what do you want me to say? What do you want me to say? Do you want me to say... who... who... what do you want me to say about it?

You seem almost embarrassed to admit that you're...

BD: Well, I'm not embarrassed, I mean, you know... well, what do you want, exactly... for me to say? You want me to jump up and say "Hallelujah"... and crash the cameras or do something weird? Tell me, tell me. I'll go along with you. If I can't go along with you, I'll find somebody to go along with you.

No, but I find that you really have no idea as to why you are, or... no thoughts on why you are so popular. That's what interests me on it.

BD: I just haven't really struggled for that. I don't, er... It happened, you know. It happened like anything else happens. Just a happening. You don't figure out happenings. You dig happenings. So I'm not going to even talk about it.

Bob, do you feel that part of the popularity is because of a kind of identification of your audience with what you're saying or what you've been writing about?

BD: I have no idea. I don't really come too much in contact.

Does it make life more difficult?

BD: No, it certainly doesn't.

Were you surprised the first time the boos came?

BD: Yeah, that was at Newport. Well, I did this very crazy thing. So, you know, I didn't really know what was going to happen, but they certainly booed, I'll tell you that. You could hear it all over the place. I don't know who they were though, and certainly whoever it was did it, you know, twice as loud as they normally would. They kind of quieted down some at Forest Hills, although they did it there, too. They've done it just about all over except in Texas... and they didn't boo us in Texas, or in Atlanta, or in Boston or in Ohio. They've done it in just about... or in Minneapolis, they didn't do it there. They've done it in a lot of other places. I mean, they must be pretty rich to be able to go someplace and boo. I couldn't afford it if I was in their shoes.

Other than the booing, have the audiences changed? I mean, do you get screaming and do you get people rushing on stage?

BD: Oh, sometimes you get people rushing the stage, but you just, you know... turn 'em off very fast. Kick 'em in the head or something like that. They get the picture.

Bob, going back to what you said a minute ago about not really being concerned or not really knowing why you are in the midst of this popularity. That is in direct opposition to what most people who reach this level of popularity say.

BD: Well, you see, a lot of people start out and they plan to try to be stars. I would imagine, like, however, they have to be stars. I mean, I know a lot of those people, you know. And they start out and they go into show business for many, many reasons, to be seen, you know. I started out, you know, like this had nothing to do with it when I started. I started from New York City, you know, and there just wasn't any of that around. It just happens, you know, so...

Don't misunderstand me, I agree with your right not to have to care. My point is that it would be somehow... somewhat disappointing for the people who think that you feel towards them the way that they feel towards you. And that's the reason for your popularity. That's what they think.

BD: No, well. I don't want to disappoint anybody. I mean, tell me what I should say... you know. I'll certainly go along with anything, but I really don't have that much of an idea.
You have a poster there. Is that an...

BD: Yeah, it's a poster somebody gave me. It looks pretty good. The Jefferson Airplane, John Handy Quintet and Sam Thomas and the Mystery Trend and the Great Society are all playing at Fillmore Auditorium Friday, December 10th, and I would like to go if I could, but unfortunately, I won't be there, I don't think, but if I was here, I certainly would be there.

Do you tour in the South?

BD: Yeah.

What's more important to you: the way that your music and words sound, or the content, the message of the work?

BD: The whole thing while it's happening. The whole total sound of the words, what's really going down is... it either happens or it doesn't happen, you know. That's what I feel is... just the thing which is happening there at the time. That's what we do, you know? That is the most important thing, there really isn't anything else. I don't know if I answered your question?
Well, you mean it might happen one time and might not happen the next time with the same song?

BD: Oh yeah! We've had some bad nights, but, well, we always take good cuts for the records. The records are always made out of good cuts and in person, it just, most of the time it does come across. Most of the time we do feel like, you know, playing. That's important to me... the aftermath and whatever happens before and after is not really important to me, just the time on the stage and the time that we're singing the songs and performing them. Or not really performing them even, just letting them be there.

Bob, we promised to spring you at a certain time which is now... it's now two o'clock.

12 December 1965
New York Herald Tribune

Source: *ISIS* #81, pp. 32-33.

A Night With Bob Dylan

INTRODUCTORY NOTE:
This article originally appeared in the NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE with a sub-heading, “Photographic Portfolio by Daniel Kramer”.
The previous day, the HERALD TRIBUNE had promised that its Sunday NEW YORK MAGAZINE would “devote 11 full pages to the amazing Bob Dylan”.
After describing Dylan as “the personification of anger and loneliness”, they went on to say that “this phenomenon is examined in depth in Sunday’s New York Magazine. Dylan’s talent is interpreted by critic William Bender. Plus a folio of photographs of the hero on a long night’s prowl around the city, with a commentary mostly in Dylan’s own words. Plus a cover portrait.”
Also on 12 December 1965, the NEW YORK TIMES carried a long piece on Dylan.
Three days later, Columbia Records issued a press release about the two pieces.

Bob Dylan picked himself up from the revolving turntable, staggered into an armchair, waved his hands above his head and sat down to watch the tube. On it, Soupy Sales was grinning from a mask of cream pie.

“Mmmmm”, said Dylan. **“What a horrible, terrible, obnoxious way to make a living!”**

Behind him, a double exposure of Elvis Presley fired two six guns into the room from a well-silvered Andy Warhol canvas covered with cellophane.

“I hate it...” Dylan said. **“I’m going to cut a hole in its abdomen and put a water hose through it.”** He got up, walked with cowboy bowlegs into the kitchen and asked someone to make him some tea. The reflection of Soupy Sales still grinned from his gray-colored shades.

It wasn’t Dylan’s pad; he had borrowed it from someone or other. On the floor, a mink rug played tablecloth for several cups and saucers, ashes and the ashtrays that the ashes had been intended for. On a couch opposite Dylan’s armchair sat Robbie Robertson, whom Dylan refers to as **“the only mathematical guitar genius I’ve ever run into who does not offend my intestinal nervousness with his rearguard sound.”** Robertson, who plays lead guitar in Dylan’s band, was strumming an autoharp. Several other people wandered about the room, some of them while sitting in their chairs.

“I want to hear that record again,” said Dylan, clattering back into the room on the high heels of his suede shoes with the laces untied. The record was “Since I Lost My Baby” by the Temptations, and Dylan had played it several times during the day.

“Do you think it’s as good as the Beethoven Quartets?” someone asked.

“I think it’s certainly as good as ‘Tracks Of My Tears’,” Dylan answered.

The doorbell rang. It was Brian Jones of The Rolling Stones with a limousine waiting outside. Dylan wiped Soupy Sales’ face off the TV tube, Robbie Robertson wiped the autoharp off his lap and everybody split. Dylan was the last to leave. He took the Temptations’ record off the turntable, hid it under his double-breasted corduroy jacket and winked at a light bulb. His tea, unsipped, was left to cool in its cup.

In the limousine, Charlie, the chauffeur, asked if the group was going downtown. **“I’m getting off at the next block,”** said Dylan. **“These other people’re going downtown...”** “Thank you, sir,” said Charlie. “No, we’re not going downtown,” said Milly, a friend of Brian’s. **“Shut up!”** said Dylan, **“shut up and quit making that racket or else you’ll be thrown to the fire**

inspectors... and they're very hungry." "What?" yelled Milly. The car stopped at the corner and Milly, one way or another, was thrown out... "Watch the fire inspectors!" yelled Brian. **"Nonsense,"** said Dylan, **"I'm just fooling. We really don't have them over in America."** The limousine eventually stopped at a bar in the Eighth Avenue district. After everyone in the party had entered, a very muscular woman ran up and very surprisingly hugged Dylan. **"You're not supposed to do that without an eyepatch!"** he jolted. **"Hug my friend there, Brian, he looks more like me!"**... **"You can write on the walls here,"** said Dylan later at the table. **"This is the only bar I know of where you can write on the walls and nobody calls you a poet."**... Sailors began wandering over towards the table and eventually everyone decided to leave. "Where's Harold the driver?" asked Bob Neuwirth, a third cousin of Bob Dylan's. **"That's not Harold,"** said Dylan, **"that's Mr. Egg, and there but for fortune go you or I."** "Ahhhhhhhhh," said Bob Neuwirth. **"You must give me two points!"** said Dylan. **"And anyway, how do you know that his name ain't Egg?"** "Where are we going?" said someone everybody called Hare-up. "We're going to the zoo."

"You Americans must all be soft," said Brian Jones. "Do you have any coyotes?" A sailor leaped on the table, grinning at Brian, who snarled back. "I like your hair," the sailor said. **"What about hair?"** Dylan said. "I thought we were going to the zoo," said Bob Neuwirth. "That's what we need," said Brian, "some coyotes." **"Are you sure you mean coyotes?"** said Dylan. "Are you sure we're going to the zoo?" said Brian Jones. **"Be yourself,"** said Dylan. Everybody walked towards the door with the sailor leaping off the table and following them. "We're not really going to the zoo, are we?" said a girl named Johanna, a mutual acquaintance of everybody. "We're not going anyplace," said Bob Neuwirth. Dylan leaned on Brian Jones and asked, **"Tell me, Brian, why is it that your lead singer does not have a little, pencil-thin moustache?"**

Back in the limousine, someone directed the driver to an underground movie house on Lafayette Street. Later on, when questioned about it, Dylan said they were all blindfolded and taken there at gunpoint. On the stage inside, there was no movie, but instead a group of green painted musicians were presenting a spontaneous ritual which had taken them three months to prepare. Timothy Cain, a friend of Dylan's, whom they had run into under the marquee, grabbed the seat next to Dylan. "Can you smoke here?" he asked Dylan. **"Of course you can smoke here,"** replied Dylan. "Put out that cigarette!" said a long-haired flowery girl, who turned out to be an usherette. Timothy ignored her. The usherette left in a huff, returning moments later with a chubby man who wore a handle-bar moustache and slippers. "Put out that cigarette!" the chubby man said. **"Oh, my God,"** said Dylan **"it's Porky Oil"**. Immediately, Timothy rose, grabbed the usherette's flashlight, unscrewed it, took the batteries out and threw the batteries at the Exit signs and proceeded to punch the chubby man in his ample stomach. At the same time, everyone in the party got up to leave as Dylan mumbled, **"What good are exits anyway?"** "I'm not an art fanatic," said Timothy, "I'm a cigarette smoker." **"I like you,"** said Dylan. **"I wish we were both alive during Napoleon's time."**

After several stops, which included a pinball arcade on 42nd Street, the backroom of a fortune teller in the Chelsea district, the Phonebooth, a discotheque, and St. Paul's Cathedral, the limousine wound up in front of a bar in Greenwich Village. Four people remained in the group, the others having been left behind by accident. "Plenty more people inside," said the chauffeur. **"Watch your tongue,"** said Dylan.

The group got out to go inside the bar, but it was already closed. **"Back to the pad,"** said Dylan. There was a small number of people gathered around the mink rug when they returned. Dylan took the Temptations' record out from beneath his double-breasted corduroy jacket and put it on the record player. Then he went into another room and closed the door.

There was a W.C. Fields movie on the TV set. Dylan walked into the kitchen to get a bandage. **"I think Marlon Brando should play the life of W. C. Fields,"** he mumbled. He fiddled around the in the kitchen. **"I also think that Warren Beatty should play the life of Johnny Weissmuller."** Wrapping the bandage round his finger, Dylan returned to his room, stopping to say, **"As for me, I plan to play the life story of Victor Mature."** "Is he serious?" said

the mild-mannered, petite colored girl, who was sitting cross-legged on the floor. She was immediately thrown out.

16 December 1965
Los Angeles Press Conference

Source: Robert Shelton, *No Direction Home*, pp. 284-286.

Q: I wonder if you could tell me, among folk singers, how many could be characterized as protest singers today?
BD: I don't understand. Could you ask the question again?
Q: How many people who labor in the same musical vineyard in which you toil... how many are protest singers? That is, people who use their music and use the songs to protest the social state in which we live today. The matter of war, the matter of crime, or whatever it might be.
BD: How many?
Q: Yes. Are there many who...
BD: Yeah. I think there's about 136.
Q: You say, "about 136"?
BD: Yeah.
Q: Or do you mean exactly 136?
BD: It's either 136 or 142.

Q: What does the word "protest" mean to you?
BD: It means singing when you really don't want to sing. It means singing against your wishes to sing.
Q: Do you sing protest songs?
BD: No.
Q: What do you sing?
BD: I sing all love songs.
Q: Is it true that you changed your name? If so, what was your other name?
BD: …Kunezevitch. I changed it to avoid obvious relatives who would come up to me in different parts of the country and want tickets for concerts and stuff like that. Kunezevitch, yeah.
Q: Was that your first or last name?
BD: That was my first name. (Laughter & applause). **I don't really want to tell you what my last name was.**

Q: Bob, why is there such a widespread use of drugs among singers today? (Laughter)
BD: I don't know. Are you a singer?
Q: Do you take drugs yourself?
BD: I don't even know what a drug is. I have never even seen a drug. I would not know what one looked like if I saw one.
Q: Bob, what sort of technique do you use when you write a song, or don't you cal it any technique?
BD: Well, I just sit down and the next thing I know, it's there…
Q: Why are you putting us, and the rest of the world, on so?
BD: I'm just trying to answer your questions as good as you can ask them.
Q: I am sure you must have been asked a thousand times—what are you trying to say in your music? I don't understand ONE of the songs.
BD: Well, you shouldn't feel offended or anything. I am not trying to say anything to you. If you don't get it, you don't have to really think about it, 'cause it's not addressed to you.
Q: Are you trying to say something when you write? Or are you just entertaining?
BD: I'm just an entertainer. That's all.
Q: Do you really feel that it's important for you to write and sing?

BD: (Menacingly) **Now, you are gonna make me mad now.**
Q: Or do you just want to do it because you're successful? Do you really feel the things that you write?
BD: What is there to feel? Name me some things.
Q: We are talking about standard emotions—pain, remorse, love…
BD: I have none of those feeling.
Q: What sort of feelings do you have when you write a song?
BD: I don't have to explain my feelings! I am not on trial here!

Q: You sound and look very tired, very ill. Is this your normal state?
BD: I take that as an insult. I don't like to hear that kind of thing.
Q: What's the reason for your visit to California?
BD: Oh, I'm here looking for some donkeys. I am making a movie about Jesus.
Q: Where are you making it?
BD: Back east.
Q: Did your parents give you any special advice when you last saw them? Did they say 'good-bye' or 'good luck' or anything like that?
BD: No, do your parents do that to you?
Q: As a little boy, did you want to write songs and be a singer?
BD: No, I wanted to be a movie usher. It's been my lifelong ambition to be a movie usher, and I have failed, as far as I am concerned.

Q: Why do you think that kids are listening to you now?
BD: I really don't know. I just heard something a couple of days ago that amazed me… outside a concert we played at San José, there was this fifteen-year-old girl… being interviewed as to why she was there… she knew all the poets, like William Blake, and she knew his works and she was hip to all kinds of different things which people are usually not acquainted with at that age. So, maybe, it's just a new kind of person, a new kind of fifteen-year-old. I do know that today there's more freedom in the mind of twenty-two-year-old college students. I know that, that's rue.
Q: What's the attitude today among your people?
BD: Oh, God! I don't know any of these people.
Q: What do you spend your money on? You seem to lead a very simple, uncomplicated life. You don't seem to be interested in motor cars, girls, yachts…?
BD: Well, that's the way it goes. (Laughter).

26 January 1966
Bob Fass/WBAI Interview, New York City, New York

Source: *Hungry as a Raccoon* by John B. Way, pp. 2-89.; *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 589-637.

The interview is more by way of a phone-in. WBAI-FM is a New York radio station sponsored by its listeners; Bob Fass (BF) was one of its regular presenters, hosting a late night show called Radio Unnameable. Fass's guest in the early hours of Jan 26th 1966 was Dylan – throughout the two hour program. Also present were Victor Maimudes (Pete The Suede) and Al Kooper (AK -Roosevelt Gook). Callers to the studio are numbered C1, C2,... etc.. Bob Fass repeated this phone-in exercise with Bob Dylan in 1985 (to be covered in a subsequent volume).

I have used the tape as my primary source but have relied heavily on the excellent transcript provided by John Way in his book *Hungry As A Raccoon*. John's book which covers both the 1966 and 1986 WBAI interviews contains detailed notes explaining many of the references or inferences in the text.

BD: That's groovy, man! Right. (commenting on music being played of Joseph Spence singing a Bahamian spiritual).

BF: This is Bob Fass. We're back on here with Radio Unnameable. Remember I told you about ten minutes ago that we were gonna have somebody come up who wasn't Shirley Temple?

BD: Ha! (sniffs)**.**

BF: Well, it's true! Say hello!

BD: Uh, I don't... this is Shirley Temple.

BF: Yeah?

BD: (laughing) **Aw, come on now, don't do this to me... I'm not supposed to do that... I haven't come down to apologize for not being Shirley Temple!**

BF: You want me to introduce you like Mike Wallace?

BD: No – no, no, I wouldn't...

BF: Uh, This is Bob Dylan...

BD: Nooo, no... would I say that?

BF: I can't say who it is? Oh alright, OK.

BD: Unless you tell 'em who I really am.

BF: Well, who are you really? Put this in front of your ugly beard. Yeah, that's good. [probably BF hands Dylan a microphone at this point].

BD: Have you got any ashtrays here?

BF: Use the floor; I'll sweep up before I go.

BD: Oh, really?

BF: Yeah.

BD: Mm. All right...

BF: This is WBAI – listener-sponsored radio in New York City.

BD: I'm not hearing much...

BF: Does that impede you?

BD: No it doesn't impede me but I'm looking for a chair back there. Can we get another chair, Bob?

BF: Yeah, we'll see if we can get another chair in here – Raoul?

BD: Sort of a nice soft, comfortable chair.

BF: Let's sit down and get nice and comfortable. What's been happening with you?

BD: Oh my God, I don't know. What's been happening with you?

BF: Well gee, thousands of people are dying to find out what's been happening with you.

BD: Well, I know twice as many people that just have... that just have been tortured to death wondering what's been happening with you!
BF: Yeah? With me too.
BD: So what have you been doing, Bob?
BF: Well see, to tell you the truth I wish you'd come up some...
BD: Well, I came up here to talk about you now.
BF: ...some other evening, Bob, because I know that it's really hard for you to communicate without an extension cord...
BD: Oh, come on...
BF: ...without electricity. Have you brought electricity with you?
BD: Yes, I did.
BF: Batteries! Oh, you're transistorised!
BD: No, I... Oh God, I keep reaching for (unclear) **I can see very well that it's** (unclear)**. I'm sorry...**
BF: Where were we, Bob? I don't know. Do you wanna take some telephone calls? Maybe if somebody could call...
BD: No; we were gonna get a chair, man...
BF: You need another chair?
BD: Well, I would like to have another chair, yeah. If it's alright.
BF: Can somebody out there bring up a chair to WBAI?
BD: Haven't you got some nice young girls that work down in (unclear)**?**
BF: ere, take a look at this, Bob.
BD: An advertisement, right?
BF: No, it's not. We don't have advertisements on this station, remember? Been a long time since you were here.
BD: Oh, yeah.
BF: (Reads) A radio station and its controversial late show announcer were knocked off the air by two men who invaded the studio and beat him with his microphone.
BD: That sounds like us. (laughs).
BF: Were you in Trenton, New Jersey last night, Bob? (Comment of "Sh, sh, sh." in background)
BD: My God.
BF: (talking of the radio announcer) He did a lot of things about 'right wing' and stuff like that.
BD: Well, I don't think it was us.
BF: No?
BD: No. We were out there, going to a Mario Lanza meeting, but we didn't see any (unclear)
BF: There's a Mario Lanza Society?
BD: Mario Lanza Society, right. But we don't wanna talk about it, though...
BF: Well, people call up and ask us to play old Mario Lanza records. Somebody called up and asked me to play some Liberace tonight.
BD: Oh, that's fine.
BF: Yeah?
BD: Yeah.
BF: Try to get in a little closer...
BD: You know, I met him one time – he smiled!
BF: Oh, yeah? I thought that he was really Merle Oberon.
BD: No, God, you oughta see him smile... I can't hear anything out here. Man, am I supposed to do this? With this over here?
BF: No, I've been putting you on. This isn't really a radio station.
BD: It's not a radio... ha ! I didn't think so ! I didn't think that'd be... (to Al Kooper AK) **You see, I told you it wasn't a real radio station.**
AK: You were right.

BD: He's got a record going right there.
BF: We'll stop that. We'll lift that off.
BD: (unclear) **Stop right now.**
BF: Who are all these people you brought up with you?
BD: I brought – over there to my right you see Charlie Fredericks. Charlie Fredericks usually handles all the equipment for the bulldozer riders, and comes with us during the half-times. And over here on your right you have, uh, Pete the Suede, who is at this minute wearing corduroy, but that's just because he doesn't (unclear)**.**
BF: Suede shades. I've never seen suede shoes before.
BD: Suede shades – yeah, that's right. Everything about him is suede if you look closely.
BF: Yeah, and he's easily swayed.
BD: And that's Harry the Hat, who's gonna change his name, by the way. To – what was that? To, uh...
AK: Roosevelt Gook.
BD: Roosevelt Gook. Just for, uh, family reasons.
BF: You mean, change it back to Roosevelt Gook?
BD: No, change it to Roosevelt Gook. He's got a pretty strange family.
BF: Well, I mean, was it Gook in the old country, before they came over here?
BD: Uh, I don't know. You'll have to talk to him about that. If you care to talk to him I'm sure he'd be glad to...
BF: Sure, I'll talk to him.
BD: Oh, what about... oh, did you get the chair... oh, you got that, right... Are we really on the radio? Now come on, now.
BF: Yeah, we're on the radio, really. I think we are, yeah. It's the first night in a long time.

an unknown voice says "Eight and a half minutes to two."

BD: Eight and a half to two.
BF: Let's open this door.

unknown voice "It's dark in there".

BD: It's very dark in there, yeah.
BF: Yeah it's tough to work without an audience, huh?
BD: It is! Well, for who? For who, Bob?
BF: For me! I usually have a screaming audience of my fans in the studio.
BD: Yeah. Oh yeah, I can see, I can see there where the water cooler is that you...
BF: That's better. That's better. Our lighting engineer just came in...
BD: Do you have a telephone here? What I really dropped in for was to use your phone. (laughter)
BF: Well, here's a dime. Why don't you go down the corner and use the one there?
BD: (laughing) **There's always one in every crowd.**
BF: You wanna take some telephone calls?
BD: Where are they?
BF: And talk to the great, vast listening audience of WBAI?
BD: Sure! Are you joking? It's all I ever do!
BF: Yeah!
BD: To quote Socrates.
BF: I'll tell you what we'll do. We will go in the studio... To quote Socrates?
BD: Yeah... to quote Socrates!
BF: Yes, but in the ancient Greek?
BD: Why should we go to the studio to quote Socrates in the ancient Greek? I don't wanna quote him in the ancient Greek.

BF: All right then, I'll go, I wasn't... I didn't
BD: No, uh, did you want it in the studio?
BF: No, I wasn't going to say...
BD: I don't even know any Greek man! I can't stay and talk in... Greek.
BF: Well, maybe we can find an old Greek text book in the studio.
BD: Well, we could do that. We could, uh...

Unknown voice "Why'd you turn on the telephone?"

BD: Turn on the television! (laughter).
BF: Turn on the television, right. Tell you what we'll do, we'll send out some...
BD: Turn on the telephone – where is this telephone I've been hearing so much about?
BF: You're not letting me tell you what we're gonna do!
BD: Your telephone is very infamous.
BF: Yeah? Here's that thing here. We get people to call us on our talk-back number, see? And you can talk to them...
BD: Can we go in there? Is there any chance of going in there? I mean, I don't wanna be a drag... Let's turn off some light in here, Bob. I can understand why your program gets to be the way it is in the wee hours. It's very light in here.
BF: Is that better? (Puts lights off).
BD: No, no.
BF: How about that? Is that better?
BD: Wow, that's better! (laughing)
BF: That's more like it! The only thing you can see is those dials!
BD: Out there's Community City! My God. (talks to friends).
BF: Yeah, we're sitting in the control room here. It looks like we have a little stick in front of us, and we're flying low over New York City.
BD: Flying low?
BF: Yeah low. Are we flying low?
BD: Yeah. Did you notify Albert Grossman we were gonna fly low?
BF: No, I didn't notify Albert Grossman. Who's Albert Grossman?
BD: He's my, uh, pepper-maker. He makes all the pepper and, uh, keeps a good supply of, uh, (unclear).
BF: He's the magic Christian pepper-maker?
BD: Oh, magic Christian – maker of pepper, yes. But, uh, I wouldn't classify him really to that... that doesn't really catch the boundary of his life. (laughs). **But it does good enough for a normal person on the street.**
BF: It bounds off the edges?
BD: Yeah, yeah. Whatever edges there are to him. Well, let's go in there. Can we go in there? Can we just play a record in the meantime and then go in there and just, uh...
BF: Yeah. Any records you wanna hear?
BD: Oh, yeah – I wanna hear that Lightnin' Hopkins record.
BF: You wanna hear a Lightnin' Hopkins one... Raoul?
BD: Yeah it's called *Drive My Car*. You can be in my car and, uh... Oh, wait, no, no, it...
BF: Let's see. I have one Lightnin' Hopkins in here, I think.
BD: Oh, really?
BF: I can't find it in the dark!
BD: Oh, well don't... There you go, that's your stacking problem. (?) **You really copped out, right? This music station business has really got...**
BF: (to 'Pete the Suede') Lend him your suede shades.
BD: I don't have any suede shades. You must be talking to somebody else.
BF: That's a Ravi Shankar there (presumably searching through record collection).
BD: What's that? Oh, come on, come on, be serious.

BF: That's a test record here – yodelling in Hi-Fi...
BD: Jesus!
BF: ...Lightnin' Hopkins!
BD: Let me see if it is. Let me pick one.
BF: Yeah, you pick one.
BD: Lightnin' Hopkins – *I Wish I Was A Baby* (laughs)**. Lightnin' Hopkins? Did he say that.**
BF: Well no, he sung it. It's a kind of a talking, uh... I wish you wouldn't drop your ashes on my Jose Feliciano records, there.
BD: Oh ho, good God. Poor Jose! Look why don't we put him between those wires over there and hang him there for a while?
BF: Talk about the subconscious wrath...
BD: That's the first terrible thing I've said all night. I've been trying to be good. *Christmas Time Is Coming* – I don't think this is the right album. This is a Joseph Spence album.
BF: No, no. This is the Lightnin' Hopkins album.
BD: Oh, I see. I was lookin'at this one's cover.
BF: Hey, how about giving me back that Lenny Bruce record I lent you three years ago? Have you got it with you?
BD: Hey, hey, come on. I don't mind making conversation but – Jesus God, man, don't just come and try to put some garbage in my, you know...
BF: You'd better watch taking the name of what's his name in vain.
BD: Who? Lenny Bruce?
BF: No! You said those other things there.
BD: Lightnin' Hopkins?
BF: No, no! You said, you know, the expletive there.
BD: Who?
BF: Just because Nietzsche says He's dead, you know...
BD: Nietzsche? (laughing)**.**
BF: Nietzsche, yeah.
BD: Which Nietzsche, man?

unknown voice says "Which Nietzsche?"

BF: Hey, did you see that on the front page, I think, of the Herald Tribune, there were these women knitting an enormous sampler... sewing on this sampler that said 'Keep The Rumor In Circulation That God Is Alive'.
BD: Well... that's better than a lot of other slogans I've heard.
BF: I can't think of one that it's better than.
BD: Oh, it's better than, uh... it's certainly better than 'I'd Rather Fight Than Switch'!
BF: But it doesn't say who!
BD: What does it care... who'd care who? I'd rather hear... what was that one you just... what does it say? What was it?
BF: The one that I...?
BD: Yeah, the one you just said. What was that? Hold it – don't play another record until we settle this.
BF: 'Keep God Alive Because The Rumor Is Dead'. The fellow who'd written... (unclear).
BD: Yeah. Now I think that's a much better rumor to spread than 'I'd Rather Fight Than Switch'. Now that's all I said, right? (laughs). **I think that's what I said.** (aside to Bob Fass, who now attempts to play the record). **Bob, quit reaching around me. Bob quit kissing me – Bob! Bob, no! No, Bob! Ah...**
BF: You don't know what love is.

The Lightnin' Hopkins record plays.

BF: This is WBAI and this old building is crammed full tonight. Bob Dylan is here with me, and we're gonna be taking some telephone calls on Oxford 7-8506...
BD: (laughs) **You get to say this...**
BF: All you hippy-dips...
BD: (laughs) **All the hippy dips.**
BF: From Forest Hills, here's your chance to call up and talk to Bob Dylan. OK?
BD: Well, hey, maybe not, now. I might refer them to somebody else.
BF: WBAI... Hello there.
C1: Listen – I've just been listening and... I called a couple of times. I was wondering is it possible to come over and take a couple of pictures?
BF: No, it's not. I'm sorry. It's all right with me – you can take pictures of me, but some other night. Bob Dylan shakes his head – no.
C1: He shakes his head no.
BF: Yeah, the truth is that Bob Dylan isn't really here, and he's sold his soul to the Devil, and pictures don't appear. People point cameras at him and push buttons and nothing happens, and they're his blank emotions.
C1: Let me ask you one question, OK? Would you just tell him that it's my 15 year-old infatuated sister-in-law, and it's not for myself. (General laughter in the studio).
BD: Oh, of course, come right over.
C1: She didn't make it to Forest Hills, and she didn't go to Antioch.
BD: My goodness...
C1: ...you know and it's rough all round.
BD: What can I do? What can I do?
C1: And I promise a cup of coffee also.
BD: Oh Jeez, you make me feel terrible, I just can't begin to... (unclear).
C1: To make steps to go along with the mustard. (?)
BD: The mustache?
C1: The mustard. And I also sent in 15 dollars, you know, so...
BD: Oh, my goodness.
BF: What, did you send it to me or to Bob Dylan?
C1: No, I sent it to you.
BF: Oh well, see, that doesn't do any good.
C1: And I'm starving. It's not possible?
BD: Oh well, all right. We'll see you again some other time. Thanks for calling.
C1: It is possible or it's not possible?
BD: Huh? It's possible what?
C1: To take a picture or not
BD: Oh – to take a picture up here?
C1: Yeah.
BD: Oh no, you wouldn't wanna do that, no, no.
C1: I would like to do that!
BD: No, no, no. You really wouldn't. You'd be very disappointed. Yeah, you'd be disappointed.
C1: (breathes heavily)
BF: (sotto voce) I don't want you to know this but do you remember when Jose Feliciano was here and he did that invitation to Bob Dylan?
C1: Yeah.
BF: He's here again tonight, and he isn't really here...
C1: Oh. Would you do me another favor?
BF: ...It's really Jose Feliciano.
C1: Ask Jose to please explain folk-rock.
BD: Ha. What, have we gotta think about it...?
C1: I followed him up till then.

BD: I've, uh...
BF: It's gone way over three minutes.
BD: Yeah, it's gone way over three minutes, now.
BF: Oh, we let people go on as long as they want here.
BD: Not me! You don't let me go on over (BEEP) **three minutes!** (laughs).
BF: Well, you went on six minutes with the last record.
BD: Oh come on now.
C1: What's that little beep for?
BD: Well, that's not a little beep. (laughs)
BF: That's coming from the amplifier.
BD: (Clearly in jest) **No, no – I don't know any folk-rock. I' m a folk singer, I'm a folk singer. I'm an ethnic folk singer. I feel very sensitive towards that fact. When people say that...** (short break in tape)... **folk singer, I usually... no, I can't hear that kind of thing. I'm very sensitive towards it and I don't wanna discuss it because it tampers into my personal psyche, uh, psycho... it, uh, I don't like it. You know like, I'm a folk singer. I'm an ethnic folk singer and like, uh, that's who I am, and if they don't like it then just don't call me up and talk to me on the telephone anymore. That's all I can say, because I don't like it and I don't... I refuse to be hurt!** (background laughter) **I refuse just to stand here on the phone and be hurt, and be asked questions which... I refuse it, I refuse it.**
BF: Let me see if I can explain something to you. Big Bill Broonzy said that all music is folk music because he never heard horses sing.
BD: That's right. Big Bill Broonzy said that! (laughs).
BF: So it must be true.

Unknown voice "You tell 'em, Bob."

C1: Can I ask an extra question? Did he originate the term – Dylan – or was that something that the papers used?
BF: Did who originate? I don't know what you...
C1: That 'folk-rock' term.
BF: Did he originate? I don't know what you're talking about. Folk-rock...
BD: Sure I did! (laughs) **Sure, I was just sitting around one night and I said "Folk-rock – what a great word!"**
BF: Irvin Silber invented the term. It's the name of his new magazine.
BD: That's right! I don't know how many people know that. Are you a folk music fan?
C1: Yeah.
BD: Yeah well I'm sure you're aware of the magazine *Sing Out!*. It's a very respected well-to-do magazine in the folk music field and you'd better recognize who it is right?
C1: (breathing heavily again) OK. Fine.
BD: OK. Now if you... better realize right now... the organization and the bosses behind that magazine work in the Brill building, in Wall Street and, uh, in the toothpaste company. Like...
BF: Ever read *the Protocols Of The Elders of Zion*...?
BD: ...they invented that phrase 'folk-rock'. They also invented the phrase 'folk music'. They also...
BF: ...Fascist, Jewish conspiracy, right.
C1: Ha you're gonna get stabbed!
BD: You said It, you said it. You said it when you just called up.
C1: Oh you're gonna get beat up!
BD: Who?
BF: By the snow lovers.
C1: Yes.
BF: Listen, we have a lot of other calls.

C1: OK, fine. Thanks a million. Bye-bye.
BF: Bye-bye WBAI.
C2: (polite female voice) May I speak to Mr. Dylan, please? (impolite laughter in the studio).
BD: Is this chick going out over the radio?
BF: Yeah.
BD: (laughs) **Can everybody else hear her voice?**
C2: Hello?
BD: Who's this?
C2: I don't know.
BD: (laughs) **All right.**

Unknown voice "That's a good start That's great."

C2: Bob did you ever share a TV dinner with anyone?
BD: Did I ever share a TV dinner with anyone?
C2: Mm-hm.
BD: Never! Never! No, no.
C2: Would you share one with me?
BD: Insult after insult.
BF: I'm sorry, I'm gonna have to close the telephone if you people keep...
BD: No I most certainly did not.
BF: ...making improper suggestions to my guests.
C2: I thought it was a free speech radio station.
BF: Yes, but there are bounds of propriety. You can't shout free speech dinner in a crowded theatre!
C2: Oh you cannot?
BD: It's true! God that's pretty good! (laughs)
C2: How about lots of TV dinners?
BF: How about what?
C1: How about lots of TV dinners?
BF: That's compounding the conspiracy.
BD: Didn't I see you on Sixth Avenue?
C2: I called up NBC and complained about what they said about you!
BD: Huh?
BF: What, dear?
C2: I said, I called up NBC concerning what they said about you.
BF: What did they say about Mr. Dylan on NBC?
C2: They didn't say anything about him but they said something about BAI that I didn't like too much.
BF: Uh-Huh!
All: Ohhh! Wooooooooh!
BF: You know what we say about NBC!
BD: Yeah.
BF: TV dinners to NBC.
C2: OK. Bob wants two, but overcooked.
BF: OK. Anything else you want to say?
C2: Is he happy?
BF: That's a good question!
C2: Are you?
BD: Who, Mr. Brill?
C2: Bob!
BF: That's my name. I'm Bob.
C2: Are you happy?

BF: No, his friends call him Bobby.
C2: Well who said I was his friend?

Unknown voice "Big Bob to all the friends!"

C2: Am I your friend? Am I?
BD: (mutters).
BF: Who are you talking to?
C2: All of you.
BF: All of us?
BD: True everybody's your friend.
BF: That's a very personal, individual question.
BD: It's not personal, no, it's just dumb! I mean everybody...
C2: Why is it dumb? Of course, I couldn't possibly be your friend, because you don't even know who I am.
BD: Oh, come on. I do too!
C2: You do not!
BD: Come on! I saw you the other day!
C2: You did, huh?
BD: I did yes, and you know I did!
C2: It's funny, 'cause I didn't see you!
BD: Well, nobody ever sees me!
C2: Except on album covers. I'd like to though because I bet you're very nice.
BD: Well, that's very fortunate. Most people don't even see those... Huh?
C2: Underneath it all.
BD: Underneath it all?
C2: Um-mm?
BD: Yeah there's a lot of fortunates. (sings) **"Underneath it all..."**
C2: Would you make a record, called '*Underneath It All*'? I bet you could.
BD: Would I? Would I make a render, uh a record underneath it all?
C2: Yeah.
BF: You have a peculiar love/hate relationship with your fans, I'm beginning to realize.
BD: No, I just realize I'm... (unclear)
BF: No, It's a love/hate, like something out of Genet.
BD: Oh, come on, all my fans have a sense of humor.
BF: OK. Unless you can say something besides 'TV dinner', we're gonna have to go on to another call.
C2: Well what can I say? Why don't you answer a question that I haven't asked? Something that you want to tell everybody but nobody asks you.
BD: Oh! I was waiting for somebody to ask me that!
C2: Well, would you?
BD: Well, no I won't.
C2: Why?
BD: Well, it's one of those things, it's one of those things.
BF: You're not wearing your tie tonight.
BD: Uh... no, you're not.
C2: What are you wearing?
BD: What are you wearing Bob?
BF: Well...
BD: He's wearing a pen, a fountain pen. He's wearing a wrist-watch. He has some very strange glasses! He wears very strange glasses, and I can tell you he'll be ready for an hear-aid pretty soon.
C2: Are you cold?

BD: Cold man – the chick's interested in you, Bob.
BF: What? Am I cold? I am a little chilly. Yeah heat up that TV dinner OK, thanks a lot...
BD: Oh yeah why don't you come here and set your lipstick on fire? (much laughter).
C2: Because I don't wear lipstick. Don't be cruel. See why don't you call back? No, you won't...
BD: Gee, we'll call you right back.
C2: No you won't.
BF: OK, bye bye.
C2: 'Bye.
BF: WBAI
C3: Hello.
BF: Hello.
C3: I wanted to ask, what happened to The Mask? Does he know what caused the demise of The Mask?
BF: What caused the demise of The Mask...
BD: The Mask... I don't know, d'you mean the Mask Theater in Newark?
C3: Pardon?
BD: You mean the Mask Theater?
C3: No it was a 'mask'. It was a bar or restaurant that I understood you used to go to on Christopher Street.
BD: I used to go to a place called The Mask?
C3: Yeah.
BD: Mm. Gee, I don't know. I'll have to pass on that. You'll have to call me back in the morning. OK?
C3: When you might be remembering it?
BD: Yeah. I don't even... as far as I know... I don't even... thank you very much anyway.
C3: OK. Can I ask one other question?
BF: If it's all right with Bob.
C3: Is it all right, Bob?
BD: Sure, sure.
C3: OK...
BD: No this is Harry.
C3: Why are some of your songs so long?
BD: My... Well, see, I get paid by the word.
C3: You get paid by the word! OK, thanks.
BD: Yeah. OK, 'bye.
BF: We're on Oxford 7-8506. WBAI.
C4: Hello. May I speak to Phil Ochs, please?
BD: (laughs) **Yes, this is Phil Ochs.**
C4: Oh.
BF: Well, you have him. What do you want to say to him?
C4: Uh, listen, the Mask Theater burnt down about eight months ago.
BD: (laughs) **You're the same cat that just called up. Come on! Will you quit this? We all know who you are, come on! We know you! We can see you!**
C4: How many phones do you think I got at this desk?
BD: Come on, come on, we can... see you. We know who you are, you can't...
C4: Right through the glass...
BD: We'll see you at the...
C4: In the Bat Cave.
BD: Yeah at the Bat Cave... good for you.
BF: WBAI.
C5: Hello is Mr. Dylan there? Can I talk to him?
BD: (laughs) **Sure.**

C5: Uh, hey, I'm on a psychedelic trip. Do you have any suggestions?
BD: (laughs) **If you're on a psychedelic trip, where are you going to?**
BF: Well change at Newport.
C5: I, I don't know, uh... I haven't decided yet.
BF: Are you going by bus?
BD: Did you pay for it, man? Did you pay for your ticket or what did you do? Did you just jump on or what?
C5: Well, I boarded... I got on board...
BD: Oh, you can afford it can you?
C5: Sure, why not?
BD: Uh-huh.
BF: Well, you have your... You're going with an outboard motor?
C5: Outboard motor? Is that a good way to go?
BD: Well... how's your gums feel?
C5: What's that?
BD: How's your gums feel at this point?
C5: It's beginning to hurt! (laughs).
BD: Ah-ha-ha, you see? It wasn't so good after all, was it?
C5: Well it's my head, I guess, now.
BD: I don't know about your head, man, but I'm more concerned with where you are. I mean you just might come into where we are!
C5: That's good. Can I do that, Phil?
BD: No, no, no, you can't do that.
C5: Why?
BF: Because there are all kinds of people waiting outside to beat us up. They're roaming around, rolling up snowballs.
C5: Why do you seem so paranoid? It seems like you're paranoid. Why should they want to beat you up.
BD: Tell him Bob, will you?
BF: Well, 'cause I guess we deserve it.
C5: Why? You're great! You got a radio station of your own and, uh... can't see why anybody wants to beat you up.
BF: 'Cause they don't like to listen to it.
C5: They don't like to what?
BF: Because we don't answer the other telephone calls.
C5: Oh! But why should you answer the other telephone calls?
BD: Well – listen, man, I hope you get where you're going...
BF: Yeah. Listen – drop us a line.
BD: ...and make sure you don't get robbed or anything, man, on the way!
C5: No. I'll be careful, OK.
BF: OK, bye-bye.
C5: All right, 'bye.
BF: WBAI.
C6: Hello. I'd like to ask Mr. Dylan why his book has not been published.
BD: Oh.
BF: There's a conspiracy.
BD: Oh, that's a serious question, right? No it's gonna be published soon. It's gonna be published... it'll be out within two months. I've just been changing it a lot.
C6: Not one, but two! I'm a bookseller – I have lots of young people asking "How long till it gets published?"
BD: Oh, I'm sorry, sir. Uh, I'm sorry sir.
C6: It's not a conspiracy really?
BD: Yes, uh, (to himself) Hmmph. What can I say to this fella? (laughs)**.**

C6: No, seriously, I...
BD: No, it'll be out within two months. The thing is, see, I've just been changing it. I mean, I just can't let this, you know... let anything go out, right? It's very easy to write a book, I mean, it's...
C6: No, but you've got lots of young people. I'm just an old man trying to sell books.
BF: You know, Truman Capote took six years to write his book.
BD: Yeah, well... no, no, I would never take six months.
C6: Well, no. Give me a clear...
BD: It'll be out, I'm told – see, I'm just gonna go over it one more time – it's in the galleys now.
C6: Yes...
BD: It never was in the galleys before. We went with the, uh, individual printers, you dig?
C6: Sure.
BD: And so, uh... but they just didn't turn out right, and it was a shuck. So I just wasted time, but now it's back in the Macmillan galleys, so it should be out within two months.
C6: Well, I'm not concerned for me, but it's the kids... you know.
BD: Mm, I realize that, yes. (aside) **Is there any tea coming?**
C6: If you just knew how much they kinda look with pleading eyes to the bookseller- 'why not?'
BD: Oh, well – I realize you booksellers are all just like octopuses, ha, ha!
C6: No, but it's kind of a compliment to you – but if I could just give you...
BD: What bookseller, uh, store do you run?
C6: I have a bookstore in New Jersey.
BD: Oh, yes.
BF: Oh, that's the one where the autograph party is going to be?
C6: No, I wish it were, but...
BD: No, the autograph party is gonna be on 12th Street.
C6: Look, I'm just trying to be business-like about this in saying...
BD: Oh, I don't talk business over the telephone.
C6: No, but seriously – if you can tell them and say its in the galleys – you were just telling me.
BD: Sure. Oh, I'll tell them, sure. It'd be a delight, sure. Sure – if you need... you want my official word on it.
C6: (unclear)
BD: Yeah, it's in the galleys. You can definitely say it'll be out within a couple of months.
C6: Well, that's kind of... it's still vague, isn't it?
BF: Yeah, I know. Our folio is often late too.
BD: Yeah, I'm just very thirsty. I gotta get a drink of water now.
C6: Look I'm trying to be quite serious about this...
BF: Uh, uh, thank you. But seriously...
C6: ...but if you look at the various announcements – oh yeah, Bob Dylan says this, says that, and then – no, sorry, it's being postponed. Can you give me any positive answers like maybe May 15th.
BF: Is there any hope?
BD: This isn't, uh, Laurence Harvey, by any chance is it?
C6: No, no.
BD: Are you sure?
C6: I'm not putting you on...
BD: Well, come on!
C6: ...I'm just a poor bookseller trying to answer the teenagers!
BD: Oh.
BF: Oh, well, we're just poor.
BD: We're just teenagers man, trying to answer...

BF: Trying to answer the telephone.
C6: Yes.
BF: So OK, thanks very much.
C6: Well, I didn't do this casually. You were asking to dial this number and I called you and I'm very pleased we talked at least for a little time.
BD: OK, 'bye.
BF: OK, 'bye.
C6: Bye-bye...
BF: WBAI.
C7: (female voice) Hi. I'd like to ask Bob Dylan a question.
BF: Why don't you?
C7: I'd like to know if he writes his songs from experience or does he just make things up? 'Cause they seem very to the point.
BF: Would you care to answer that, Mr. Dylan?
BD: Oh, well – I don't care to ask... uh, what would you think?
C7: Well, I don't think anyone can write them, unless it was...
BD: Experience?
C7: ...you know, from life. I was just wondering if you were going to say it.
BD: What's experienced about them?
C7: Well, I mean, like *It Ain't Me, Babe* and *Don't Think Twice, It's All Right*.
BD: Oh. Oh, you don't have to go anyplace to have those kind of experiences though, really, do you?
C7: Well, I don't know. You have to go through something! I mean, did you just make them up? Come on...
BD: Well, I guess I did. I just made 'em up out of my head, yeah.
C7: You did, huh?
BD: I guess so. I mean, you know, I can't say I didn't. I can't say they weren't in my head. But right now at this minute, uh, I have something else in my head... and, uh – I don't wanna get personal about this... please don't take it personal...
C7: (laughs) Alright, you enjoy yourself.
BD: No, I'm sorry, I just drifted off there for a minute. I didn't mean to... you don't have to worry about it. It shouldn't bother you one little bit, how I write my songs.
C7: Oh, it doesn't bother me.
BD: Well, good!
C7: I like them very much.
BD: You shouldn't even think about where they come from, or what, you know... you shouldn't think about anything. If you like 'em you like 'em, and if you don't, you don't. You don't have to think about 'em. OK?
C7: OK
BD: OK, bye.
C7: Right, 'bye.
BF: This, by the way, is WBAI in New York City, and this is Radio Unnameable.
BD: Who's calling please?
BF: WBAI.
BD: Yes, who's calling, please?

Unknown voice "Garth Hudson."

BD: Hello. Who's calling?
BF: Who's calling, please?
C8: Hello, my name is Frankenstein.
BF: Yes?
BD: Yes?... I don't believe him.

C8: Can I speak to Bob Fass, please?
BF: Yeah, I'm speaking, Mr. Stein.
BD: Are you gonna get any tea...?
C8: Hello. Yeah... Oh, Frankenstein – that's my second name.
BF: Yes... we don't seem to...
C8: Yeah?
BD: Yeah, yeah, hold it there, Frankenstein.
BF: Do you want some tea with lemon, huh? I wish someone would try to get some tea with lemon.
C8: Hello.
BD: Yeah, OK, Mr. Frankenstein.
C8: Yeah, well, uh, I don't want to speak to Bob Dylan.
BF: You want to speak to me, right?
C8: No, I wanna... you see...
BF: Yes? Are you having trouble talking, sir?
C8: Well, uh...
BD: ...say, Frankenstein, come on!
C8: Uh... Can you get her phone number?
BF: Can we what?
C8: Can you get her phone number?
BF: Whose phone number?
C8: You see, uh, I'm pretty hungry.
BF: Uh, huh. Thanks a lot, uh...
BD: No, no. Don't turn him off... he's hungry! Tell me, are you as hungry as a man in drag?
C8: Yeah? ..
BD: Uh?
C8: Yeah, well, she got a TV dinner there.
BD: Hey, hey, hey... come on, now. (pause). **Oh, you can't get an answer... How hungry are you?**
C8: Oh, I'm starvin'.
BF: Oh?
BD: How? How hungry? Are you as hungry as, you know, as a raccoon – a piece of flypaper that's balancing on a pair of ear-plugs...
C8: Yeah...
BD: ...out, out in Allen Ginsberg's kitchen? Are you that hungry?
C8: I'm down outside your studio now.
BD: Huh?
C8: I'm down outside your studio now. I'm waitin' to throw snowballs at you, but I'm so hungry, I'm sort of eating them.
BD: You're waitin' to throw snowballs, huh? Well, this is all a joke here now. You just come up a little closer to that door, and you see what's gonna happen. If you come up just a little closer, you throw one at that door. We're not down there, but you just go ahead and do it!
C8: I got a mob with me too.
BD: Oh, groovy! (laughs)
C8: And a small Irishman called Quill.
BD: Oh ho-ho! Very scary, very scary indeed but, uh... I'm not hungry.
C8: Yeah, yeah, you wanna see us, but...
BF: So long, bye-bye.
BD: Why don't you say goodbye nice to him and...
BF: Goodbye nicely, sir.
C8: Well, so long.
BF: Nicely. WBAI.

C9: Hello, is this Dial-A-Prayer?
BF: (laughs) Yes this is Dial-A-Prayer.
BD: Diaphragm?
BF: Dial-A-Prayer!
BD: Oh.
BF: That's where you sing from.
BD: Oh.
BF: Yeah, hello. You'll have to turn your radio down, sir.
BD: I thought they were those things that chicks get. (laughs)
BF: Hello? Hello? So long! WBAI.
C10: Hello... Mr. Dylan, please.
BF: Yes, the voice of sanity!
BD: Switch her right over here. This sounds very good.
C10: Hello.
BD: Who is this?
C10: Hello, who is this?
BD: Well, who is this?
C10: This is Ann!
BD: Well, you have to, you have to say who it is because they have to all be marked down on a little book that has to go into the YMCA files.
C10: Yeah, all right...
BD: So who is this, please?
C10: This is Ann Wilkinson, sort of from Buffalo.
BD: Who?
C10: Ann Wilkinson, sort of from Buffalo. I sort of met you there.
BD: (mockingly) **Ann Wilkinson from Buffalo – oh yes, of course.**
C10: I sort of burst in on one of your concerts at Kleinhans.
BD: You what?
C10: I sort of burst in on one of your concerts at Kleinhans.
BD: Oh, yeah, pretty good.

Unknown voice "Beating on the window..."

BD: Oh you beat on the window. Was that you? One of those people who was beating on the window out there?
C10: No, no, not there. I saw it from the sky!

Unknown voice "A go go dancer!"

C10: Uh, I wanted to wish you Merry Christmas.
BD: Well, thank you very much! How's your toe? (laughs)
C10: I'm a bit late. I also wanted to know when *Visions Of Johanna* is coming out.
BD: What?
C10: I wanted to know when *Visions Of Johanna*...
BD: Oh, you heard that song?
C10: Yeah, Al Kooper played it for me. (much laughter in the studio)
BD: Say that again!
C10: Al Kooper played it for me.
BD: Oh, yeah. It's good, huh? (laughs)
C10: Yeah, and I would rather hear you sing it, I think.
BD: Wow! Where does all these... what do... where do you do... where is... well, oh, it's coming out on the next record.
C10: Oh, it is?

BD: Yeah. You never heard me play it, huh?
C10: No, no.
BD: Oh.
C10: It's a real good song, though.
BD: Yeah it's weird... (studio chat).
C10: I mean, from what I heard from Al, you know. Yeah, well, I'd like to hear it sometime.
BD: OK.
C10: OK?
BD: Yeah, 'bye now.
C10: Nice talking to you, bye bye.
BD: Do you have any matches?
BF: Anybody out there have any matches, and some tea?
BD: Oh, yeah – where's all the tea, Bob?
BF: WBAI.
C11: Yeah.
BF: Hello?
C11: Hello.
BF: Yeah... hello.
C11: Uh, I'd like to get an impression on The Fugs from Dylan.
BD: On The Fugs?
C11: Yeah.
BD: (to Bob Fass) **I'm not sure I can get it right now, The Fugs.**
BF: No. The rock n' roll group.
BD: Oh, the rock n' roll group, The Fugs? The rock n' roll group, The Fugs!
C11: That's right. Yeah, Tuli Kupferberg and Ed...
BD: Oh, oh, right! I haven't... I have never... I just heard a record, uh, one record by them. Are... you really wanna know? Oh, I think they're great, man, I really think they're great. I think they're...
C11: You been down to see 'em?
BD: No. Well, I'm never in town, but I think they're the best. I'll push 'em as much as I can, you know. I really... I think they're definitely the best.
C11: Yeah, well – what I was thinking is...
BD: I know Peter's not in the group any more, Peter... I've always wanted to go hear them but I could never make it down there.
C11: Yeah, well – d'you ever get into that vein?
BD: What?
C11: Well, you know-that type of music?
BD: The Fug music?
C11: Yeah.
BD: What kind of music is that?
C11: Well, the Fuggery sounds.
BD: Fuggery sound?
C11: Uh, you know—it's not so easy to...
BD: Well, I know... (?), **man. But I mean, a Fuggery sound. I mean. Are you serious? Fuggery sound – what's a fuggery sound? Fuggery sound isn't a sound.**
C11: Well, you know – a colorful sound.
BF: Hey, listen – I'd like to remind everybody that we're on the radio here, and that, uh...
BD: Why? Why d'you want to remind everybody?
BF: 'Cause the... FCT spells the name of that group a different way.
BD: Did they call up?
BF: No, but you know, we have licenses and things to protect. Everybody be careful, everybody be careful.

BD: Oh no... you know, personally I think... I think they really, uh, they really, uh, can change a lotta things, but like, that's 'cause I think they're great, you know – I think they're, they're very dimensional. I mean – like, they're that way but... like, I know, I know, uh, I don't know what... well, I don't know any of them – I don't think I do. I might – oh, I might know those two guys, uh, Ed Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg. I think I might have said hi to them, but... in the East Side at certain times, but... like, I don't think I... I haven't actually talked to them. I mean, I don't know how they are musically, but... like, I remember, but I know they write and they have that kind of sense, but... like, it's, it's a different thing...

C11: Yeah.

BD: ...uh, but... like, they're, they're very straight and honest and – like... and like, they have it made, man, you know? Like if they want to... uh, to reach a whole lotta people...

C11: Well...

BD: ...No, but – like... but – like, it's up to them if they want to do it, you know, that's all.

C11: eah. Like, there's some pieces that can't go on the air.

BD: Oh, it don't even matter about that, it's just how... it just matters if they wanna, uh, reach a whole lotta people... if they think what they're doing is different enough that they... to reach a whole lotta people.

C11: Sure. Going on the air they call themselves 'the group that sings the napalm mantras'...

BD: Oh. Hey, well, they're very good.

C11: ...and that gets it.

BD: I, I like them a whole lot. I think they... (?)... **great.**

C11: Oh, it's good to know. OK, thanks.

BD: Yeah, 'bye.

C11: So long

BF: Bye-bye. WBAI...

C12: Good evening. I'd like to talk to Bob Dylan.

BF: Why don't you?

BD: You have to give your name.

C12: Uh, my name's Steve.

BD: What?

C12: Steve.

BD: Steve what?

C12: It's Gitlin.

BD: Steve Dylan?

C12: Gitlin.

BD: Dylan. (laughs)

Unknown voice – "Steve Dylan!"

BD: That was almost my name! (laughs)

BF: What was it before it was Gitlin?

C12: What was it before it was Gitlin? Gitlin!

BD: What do you have to say, Dylan?

C12: Uh, Bob...

BD: (Laughs) **Come on. What else have you go to say?**

C12: Uh, Bob, I wish it were Dylan. To start off with, uh, what do you think of the group called The Byrds?

BD: The Fugs?

C12: The Byrds!

BD: The Byrds! Oh, come on! Don't ask me these kinda questions, I don't wanna... I get... I don't wanna do this kind of...

BF: Yeah.

BD: I like The Byrds, man I like everybody! Come on whaddaya mean?
BF: Can somebody bring some water in here please.
C12: What do you do, uh...
BD: Well, what do I think of Rosemary Clooney or Judy Garlands' daughter? Rosa Minelli?
C12: What? What do you think about boys who have long hair? Do you think...
BD: Oh, you're Rosa Minelli's boyfriend, I know you are.
BF: Boys with long hair, huh?
C12: Do you think they should be made to be... uh, be made to be cut?
BD: Oh, what do you think?
C12: Oh, not really.
BD: Oh well then, there you have it There you have it in a nutshell.
BF: That's up to you.
BD: It's up to you. It's in your hands, man, I don't know anything about... what do I care? It's in your hands. Whatever you think, you tell your principal that.
C12: Yeah, and if they funk me out of school?
BD: Well, I don't know, I..
BF: You don't wanna go to a school like that, do you?
BD: That depends what you wanna do, man. If you wanna go... you wanna go to school or if you don't wanna go to school. If you don't wanna go to school, you can try to help school. But if you wanna go to school, you just better... just take your place and be quiet.
C12: Uh huh? Have got a new album out?
BD: Have I?
C12: Yeah.
BD: No, it won't be out in about February.
C12: Uh, huh. Uh where do you get your ideas for songs?
BD: No, no, this is... over the limit. I can't...
BF: From people who call up, I guess. From people who call up. I m gonna go to another call; thanks a lot.
BD: Goodbye now, 'bye now.
BF: Bye-bye. WBAI...
C13: Can I have Bob Dylan, please?
BF: Can you what? Can you have him? No. Nobody can have him.
BD: Uh, you have to give your name – I'm sorry, sir.
C13: Uh, Melvin Margoulis...
BD: Melvin Margoulis. I've seen you before.
C13: ...oh this is behind (?) – I'm really Bob Dylan!
BD: Uh? What?
C13: I'm really Bob Dylan! ,
BD: Ha, ha. I know you are.
C13: How do you know?
BD: How do I know? I heard...
C13: Well, get that imposter off the radio.
BD: Well, what can I do, man? He's sitting here right now, he's...
C13: No, but I'm really John, by the way.
BD: Oh, well. Well, I, I, I, uh...
BF: I think you have a very advanced case of schizophrenia. I'll go on to the next call. We're at Oxford 7-8506.

While the following conversation takes place between Dylan and Fass, caller 13 continues talking: "No, no, see, I know Ann Wilkinson, and she's from Buffalo and so am I. Uh-huh?", and then seems to be trying to join in with the conversation. He is totally ignored!

BD: Well, hold on now – don't be mean. Now don't be mean, uh, you can't just turn him off like that!
BF: No?
BD: No, I don't think that's...
BF: But that's my image!
BD: Oh yeah, but come on...
BF: I have to maintain my image. I have a mean image.
BD: Just for one night! Be nice to people, just – just one night.
BF: I'll try.
BD: Have you ever been nice to people, man? Have you ever walked on the street, Bob, and just looked at somebody and said you know, "Hi!", you know? I don't know if you have...
BF: Try?
BD: No, I'm not saying try... I've never done it! No, but I mean, a lotta people have done it, you know, and I can understand...
BF: Just say "Hi!" to everybody I meet?
BD: Well, yeah – I do it in different ways. Like, I go up to 'em and, uh, I give them things, you know, like rocks. Just things I pick up on the block before I meet them or stuff like that.
C13: Hello?
BF: Give 'em folk-rock?
BD: (to the poor guy on the phone) **Yeah, I'm sorry. Goodbye.**
C13: Yeah, OK, bye-bye.
BD: See you later.
BF: Bye-bye. WBAI...
C14: Hello.
BF: Hello, why is everybody talking so low now? It sounds like the telephone is very low.
C14: Sounds like the telephone is low?
BF: Maybe because it's late at night...
C14: Getting late.
BD: Who's this?
C14: What was that?
BD: Who's this?
C14: Oh, I wanna speak to Bob Dylan if I...
BD: Well, you have to give your name.
C14: Oh, well, uh... you see, I wrote an article for him, it's just some magazine.
BD: Well, you have to give your name anyway, because the YWCA wants it.
C14: Yeah, I know. (laughs)
BD: So what is it?
C14: Larrie Birnbach.
BD: Larrie Birnbach, right. Larrie Birnbach. B, I, R... .
BF: Is that CH or CK?
C14: CH, CH.
BD: Birnbach...
BF: How do you spell that name?
C14: B-I-R-N-B-A-C-H.
BD: How do you spell the first name? Larrie – how does that... how do you spell that? Larrie? Larrie?
C14: Yeah?
BD: Yeah, you know, just spell your first name out. Just spell it.
C14: Oh, L-A-R-R-I-E. It's really...
BD: L-A-R-R-I-E.

C14: ...Yeah, yeah.
BD: That's who you are. You're Larrie.
C14: That's right.
BD: OK, Larrie...
C14: OK, man! (laughs)
BD: Shoot!
BF: OK – what is it you'd like to know, Larrie?
C14: What is it I'd like to know? I just wanted to speak to him about the article – I wanted to find out if he...
BD: Oh, yeah – what article?
C14: Oh, I wrote an article called, uh, 'Bob Dylan' which was in Hit Parader magazine.
BD: Was it good? What magazine?
C14: *Hit Parader*.
BD: Oh – was it good?
C14: Uh, well, I thought it was pretty good, yeah.
BD: Oh. Well then – I guess it was good!
C14: Yeah it was fairly good.
BF: You were happy with it – you thought it was an artistic success?
BD: It's a job that you did well by it and then...?
C14: I felt that I'd succeeded, yeah.
BD: OK, well, that's fine...
BF: Send a copy of it...
BD: Thank you very much. I'll send you a pencil. I usually send pencils...
BF: Larrie?
C14: Yeah?
BF: Send a copy of it to me here.
C14: Send a copy of it to you?
BF: Yeah.
C14: Who am I speaking to?
BF: Bob Fass.
C14: Oh, oh, am I on the air now?
BF: Yeah, you're on the air now!
C14: Oh, I am on the air!
BF: Yeah.
BD: Yeah, Larrie!
C14: Oh. How are you, man? (laughs) Did you read the article?
BF: Yeah, send some coffee through with the mail, would you?
BD: (laughs) **Now his whole tone changes! You didn't know you were on the air before, huh?**
C14: What's that?
BD: You didn't know, Larrie?

Unknown voice – "Could have said a whole lot more."

BD: Could have said a whole lot more...

Short break in the recording here

BD: Yeah, OK, listen, we'll see you later, 'cause we have to all go to sleep now.
C14: Let me ask you something. Have you seen Scott Reuss (?) at all recently?
BD: Gee, gee. So many friends I've got. They just call me up...
BF: Yeah, just like uh... Listen – this is getting to be, like very personal. This is not of wide interest.
BD: It's not personal, like...

C14: Did you read the article?
BD: No, no, I didn't.
C14: You didn't read it. Well, yeah, I'll get a copy of it to you.
BD: Huh?
C14: I'll get a copy of it to you.
BD: Oh, OK. Just send it to WBAI. It'll usually... yeah.
C14: Yeah, I will, I will. Good.
BF: Yeah, Bob works in the subscription department with B. J. Richards.
C14: He does huh? (To Bob Fass:) Listen, man. You know, I, I really... I dig these blues things you have in there, I really do.
BD: (misunderstanding) **Oh, thank you very much.**
C14: No, not you! Fass. He has some nice things he plays.
BD: Yeah. (laughs)
BF: OK. Thank you.
C14: 'Bye.
BF: 'Bye. WBAI...
C15: Yeah, I'd like to speak to Bob Dylan.
BF: Hello?
BD: (laughs) **Oh, you have to give your name.**
BF: Hello?
C15: My name is Linda Mingo.
BD: Linda Mingo. Are you any relation to Charlie?
C15: No, I'm no relative at all.
BD: Oh. Are you alone?
C15: I'd like to know if Bob remembers the old Ten O'Clock Scholar in Minneapolis.
BD: Sure!
C15: Well... Bob...
BD: Oh, now you're getting... you're a representative of the Ten O'Clock Scholar, and they're going bankrupt right?
C15: No I'm not! I just thought you'd like to know the place burned down before Christmas!
BD: Oh great! (laughs) **I didn't know that.**
C15: Yeah! Like, the fire started in the dirty grocery...
BD: Oh, far out...
C15: And the Chinese Laundry went, and the old apartments above it...
BD: Chinese laundry, dirty grocery...
BF: What's the Ten O' Clock Scholar, Bob?
BD: It's a coffee house in Minneapolis.
C15: Yeah. It's a place where Bob used to play. I worked there about, uh, be about six years ago.
BD: Oh, yeah. 'Bout the same time as I was there, right?
C15: Yeah, I know. When Clark Batho had the place. Anyway, uh...
BD: Uh-huh. We were good friends.
C15: ...it's gone!
BD: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I can't say...
C15: Well, I have to go back to sleep, so...
BD: OK, go back to sleep. See you later.
BF: You mean you woke up just to call Oxford 7-8506?
C15: No, I just woke up to hear an old familiar voice.
BD: Oh...
C15: Bye-bye.
All: Ah...
C15: Ooh...
BD: Oh hey! Are you gonna just say "Hey Bob – you'd better put your head on the street?"

C15: No – I, like, have to go to sleep.
BD: Hey, listen – Bob's sitting up there, hey...
BF: Hey, hey...
BD: ...Linda? Linda?
C15: Yeah?
BF: (to Dylan) Psst, psst... it's your voice. It's your voice, not mine.
BD: (to Bob Fass) **I'm trying to help you.**
BF: I'm trying to help you, Bob.
C15: Oh, I'll tell you what – I'm trying to go back to sleep.
BD: She likes you.
BF: No – she likes you, Bob!
BD: Hey, come on.
C15: Bye-bye.
BD: So long.
BF: Hey, we're fighting over you.
C15: Bye-bye.
BD: I'm not. (laughs)
BF: WBAI...
C16: Hello – Bob Fass?
BF: Yeah?
C16: Can I speak with Mr. Dylan?
BF: Sure!
C16: Mr. Dylan?
BF: You see? They all like you, Bob!
BD: Texas. (laughs)
C16: Are you coming to Westchester, February?
BF: No, I'm not. Oh, you! (to Dylan).
BD: Oh, me!
BF: I keep forgetting.
BD: I don't know...
C16: To the County Center?
BD: I'm playing in February in White Plains...
C16: White Plains.
BD: ...and to say... Oh – wait, now – yeah I guess I am – I don't know if it's advertised, I am.
C16: Mm. I'm gonna see...
BD: OK. See you later.
C16: OK.
BF: WBAI...
C17: Bob Fass?
BF: Yeah?
C17: Uh, you know, uh...
BF: Turn your radio down.
C17: Yeah, I just did. Hey, you know, I can hear this stuff on WCBS or NBC all day long.
BF: You can?
C17: I really much prefer to hear...
BF: Well, how can you manage to stay up so late, if you're gonna listen to CBS all day long?
C17: I never listen to it, but one of the reasons I'm a supporter of BAI's 'cause I like, you know, 'Unnameable'.
BF: Yeah?
C17: ...and everything else, but this is a drag!
BF: This is a drag?
C17: (?)... I'd much prefer to hear.
BF: Don't you have any respect for our feelings?

C17: A great deal...
BF: How do you think we feel when you tell us something like that?
C17: I'm just being honest. I'm supporting you...
BF: Just because... just because we're in showbiz doesn't mean that we have no hearts...
C17: Hearts?
BF: Hearts, yes, hearts.
C17: Come on!
BD: No. What's your name, right? You didn't give your name.
C17: Dave Applet on.
BD: Dave Appleton. Where are you from, Dave Appleton.
C17: Where am I from?
BD: Yeah, come on!
C17: New York.
BD: New York City? What do you do?
C17: What am I doing?
BD: No. What do you do?
C17: Oh...
BD: Come on! What do you do?
C17: I'm a bum.
BD: What do you do for a living?
C17: What do I do for... I'm in insurance.
BD: You're in insurance for a living right?
C17: Right.
BD: You sell insurance?
C17: Nope.
BD: Well, what do you do in insurance? What do you mean?
C17: I'm an adjuster.
BD: You're an insurance adjuster. How old are you?
C17: Huh?
BD: How old are you?
C17: I'm 26.
BD: 26. You've had four years at college, right.
C17: Mm.
BD: Two years?
C17: None.
BD: None. You worked your way up on the ladder. You were apprenticed, uh, acoustical, uh...

Unknown voice "Insurance..."

BD: Insurance, uh, cl... uh, clerk, or... right?
C17: A what? An acoustical?
BD: Hey, what? Yeah, right?
BF: Adjuster.
BD: Adjuster.
C17: No, it's just... no I was in the music business for six years.
BD: Well, what kind of music? Rock n' roll?
C17: Excuse me? No, no, what?
BD: Rock... You were in rock n' roll music?
C17: Not by a long shot. No, I was in public relations.
BD: In folk music you were in?
C17: No, I was...
BD: Well, what kind of music were you in?

C17: ...huh?

BD: What kind of music were you in?

C17: I was doing public relations for Shelly Manne.

BD: Jazz!

C17: ...Jack Sheldon...

BF: Jazz!

BD: Jazz, right? right?

C17: Right!

BD: And so... and so you dig all the... you dig all the records that Bob plays, right?

C17: Uh, no.

BD: But you dig most of them right?

BF: (interjects while Dylan is speaking)

BD: No. I know where he's at. You just, uh... you just feel insulted when somebody comes down to advertise to you.

C17: No!

BD: You think you're, you think you're... you're beneath or above all that, when somebody comes along and...

C17: No...

BF: Are you... Is that why you're here?

C17: No not at all!

BF: Are you here to advertise?

BD: No, no, no. He is! Don't get me wrong, but...

BF: Oh, he is. Is he advertising Shelly Manne... on a non-commercial radio station? That Shelly Manne supports?

BD: Yeah, yeah, right. Right he's doing that. But the only reason he listens to your radio station is because there's no advertising and it brings him down to hear advertising, you know. He's really one of these...

C17: No no, it doesn't bring me down.

BD: ...high class cats man. He's an insurance adjuster.

C17: Gentlemen no. It doesn't bring me down...

BD: Oh, come on. You can go any place you wanna go. Now, come on, be thankful for that. You're very inconspicuous and... and be thankful for that You have many blessings. You don't have to worry about who... what's gonna be played to you on the radio, for God sake's – nor why should you?

C17: Yeah, no, but you know, I'm...

BD: Why don't you turn on some other...

C17: Hey, dig, baby. I'm up here tonight tryin' to hear some good... you know, some good Radio Unnameable.

BD: Well, you know, listen tomorrow night!

BF: That's a contradiction in terms! (at the mention of good radio unnameable)

C17: But frankly I prefer to hear you sing.

BD: W... mm... prefer to hear me sing.

C17: You know, man, to hear, you know these insults pouring out...

BD: Well, forget... forget that it's me here. Just think of somebody you never even heard of.

C17: Think of something I've never heard of?

BD: Think, think of something...

BF: Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a m... did you say you will sing?

BD: No. I... come on. No.

BF: Oh well, then, OK.

BD: No.

C17: See that's what I prefer to hear!

BD: Oh well. Hey, well... I can't help it...

C17: 'Cause I think... I think that your singing is a lot more exciting than... than, you know, what's been going on.

BD: Yeah, well, it probably is! But, who am I to judge? I'm certainly not gonna look into any kind of incrimination from you!

BF: Mr. Appleton? Mr. Appleton?

C17: Huh?

BF: Mr. Appleton?

C17: Yes.

BF: I bet there a lot of people who think that your singing is more exciting than what you've been saying.

C17: Oh I doubt it! I doubt it very seriously! And then again...

BD: No, no. Mr. Appleton's prob... Hey, we've been taking up a long time with him.

BF: OK, we're gonna go on to the next call.

BD: Yeah we're going on to the next call, but listen – uh, well, you... it's, uh... you've been very appreciative, believe me.

BF: Impatient too. Oxford 7-8506.

BD: Hey, tomorrow night. Tomorrow night, promise. Promise you he'll be right back to normal and just... a night, man, what's a night? I mean, one night. So you can, you know, listen to records or try another station. One night – it'll be good. (?)

C17: No, but I prefer to listen to BAI. Hey look, I can't...

BF: It won't hurt you to get to bed early one night.

BD: Hey, that's true too.

C17: What's true?

BD: That's true too. What time do you get up in the morning?

C17: Uh, about eight.

BF: Oh, well, you'd better get to sleep!

C17: No, I stay up all night listening to this thing. I got insomnia.

BD: No wonder. No wonder you call up now and say these terrible things! You don't get any sleep!

C17: They're not terrible things!

BD: Oh, God, man... how can you talk anymore. How can somebody talk to me... D'you have any friends...?

BF: You'd better go to sleep. We have some other callers.

BD: (indignantly) **Do you ever write letters? Taking pleasure** (?)... **How do you like your boss?**

C17: I have no boss.

BD: Ohh...

C17: I am the boss.

BD: Yeah. Well, you're just... you're just like all the rest of the people.

BF: All the rest of the bosses. We have another call, thank you.

C17: Okeedoke.

BF: Bye-bye.

C17: So long.

BF: WBAI...

C18: Oh, hello...

BF: Hello.

C18: Bob Fass? .

BF: Yeah?

C18: Um, are you gonna play any more music tonight?

BF: Sure.

C18: That's good! (laughs)

BF: Oh-ho. wow!

C18: Um... Could you play some Jim Kweskin when you get around to it?

BD: (laughs)

BF: I don't think I have any of his records.

BD: Jim Kweskin!

C18: You don't?

BF: No, I don't think I have any of his records!

C18: Oh. Oh!

BF: Oh. Do you?

C18: Yes!

BF: Well, why don't you play them?

BD: No. For how long are people callin' up there? They have to just say what they wanna say in one word...

C18: Well, I'd rather hear it over the radio.

BF: Why would you rather hear it over the radio? How lazy can anybody be?

BD: ...this chick... this chick is gonna have to say why she called up...

C18: Well, I don't usually hear it over the radio.

BD: Hello. Give her name and say what she wants to talk about Jim Kweskin, right? And then – we'll see if we wanna do it. We can't take all these calls; this switchboard... Jim Kweskin!

BF: OK, thanks very much.

C18: All right. Goodbye.

BF: We can't follow your suggestion.

BD: Well I didn't mean... I didn't say that to her. I didn't... she didn't say that, did she?

BF: WBAI...

C19: I'd just like to speak to Bob Dylan, please.

BF: Yes, you may.

C19: Uh, Mr. Dylan – I was just wondering why you all sit around there... pardon me if that sounds nasty, but why you all sit around there putting down every phone caller, when in fact all you have to do is to be, you know, sweet, loveable Bob Dylan and everybody will go crazy and ecstatic!

BD: Oh my God man! Hey, no! Hey, no; you just don't, man, you just don't understand! I mean – all these, all these people... hey, hey, listen! I don't know who this is. I'm not even gonna ask your name! That's how much I think of you! but... all... everything you just said... hey, you know – like, these people are calling up... any... I'm sure that any normal person that's listening, knows that this is just not a putdown! Now if you just listen to all the words in your own mind – putdown, bringdown, comedown...

C19: Yeah... OK. (laughs)

BD: ...you know, just listen to what your vocabulary consists of. Well then, this comes closest. Nobody's being put down!

C19: But you're inviting it! You're inviting the whole thing by saying, "Hey, come on kids, call me up."

BD: Not to kids! What kinda kids are gonna be up at this hour, listening to the radio?

BF: Yeah – go to bed, kids.

C19: Everybody that calls up then, they say, "Hey Bob, like, I know you," or "Hey, listen! What are you doing about karma and stuff like that."

BD: Now come on, come on, come on, come on. What do you want me to do... answer them? (laughs)

BF: What would you like us to talk about?

C19: Talk about something that you like!

BD: I like to do this right now. When I leave from here and ride around in the car we'll talk about some other things. Right now we're here. What can I say to you?

C19: OK I'm sorry.

BD: OK. You should be. So long.

BF: No. You shouldn't be sorry.

BD: No, no. You shouldn't be sorry, I'm sorry... I'll give you two tickets to *Choose The Consequences*.
C19: No, no. But the whole thing is that it sounds like each one is trying to show how aware they are of what a bad scene they were...
BD: No, we're just all in a very strange mood, that's all! You don't have to put up or put...
C19: It's not moods. No, it's scenes. That's different from moods.
BD: Oh, well, hey, listen. Whatever goes down, please don't take it personal. What am I gonna do?
C19: I always take it p...
BD: Oh, do... not take it personal.
C19: No. I listen to your songs, and my sister loves you...
BD: Oh, right! Everybody's sister loves me...!
C19: ...and we followed you from the beginning, like a little boy...
BD: ...Everybody's kids love me! Nobody loves me... !
C19: ...And we said, "This is Rimbaud!" You know – this is a beautiful adolescent growing up!
BD: ...what d'you say?
C19: This is a beautiful adolescent growing up we feel, you know, both pity and sorrow but also beautiful and love and all those kind of things. Then to hear you get on the phone and... and be hip, you know...
BD: Yeah. Hip, hip.
C19: ...it sort of just doesn't come.
BD: I'm really hip!
C19: Yeah, this is just...
BD: Hey, listen. You're hip, man, I'm not hip. I'm not.
C19: Oh, come on! Don't do that!
BD: You're much more hippier than I am from being so aware of the situation now.
C19: No, no, don't do that!
BD: I'm not hip. Don't... don't do it to me.
C19: Don't do it to me either! God knows... !
BD: Oh, my God, the cat's just lost his mind! (laughs) Hey, come on! Come on now – it's OK!
C19: Yeah, I know it's all right, but my poor sister may be listening, and I don't want her...
BD: Oh, well, you just explain it to her, right? If she's your sister...
C19: Yeah.
BD: The least you can do is take an interest in her.
C19: I know.
BD: So explain it to her if you know better. If you don't know better, don't complain to me.
C19: Well, could you explain it to her? Could you say, you know, like...
BD: I don't even know her!
C19: Still, but you're talking to a radio audience.
BD: Hey, I'm sure you know her much better than I do! Can't you explain it to her? I don't know her. I don't even know what she wants me... what she wants to have explained to her.
C19: Say, "Hey, I'm nice". That's all.
BD: What's her name?
C19: Her name is Merle.
BD: Merle. Huh. OK, I might... hey, I gotta tell you though, I never in my whole life... I have foreseen a lot of things but, like, I've never, never, never uh, foreseen saying "I'm nice" to somebody by the name of Merle!
C19: No, true.
BD: I mean, I never have. It comes out of the blue, you know.
C19: (inaudible)... anything can happen.
BD: I mean, have you ever?

C19: Yeah! Sure.
BD: Have you ever considered saying, "I'm nice" to somebody by the name of Bodegarde?
C19: Yes. Yes, certainly.
BD: D'you think about it?
C19: I read Pogo while I was sitting here, saying 'Little doggy, you're nice and I'm nice too'.
BD: Oh. You read the comic strips, right?
C19: Sure.
BD: Oh, God. OK. Well, we'll see you later.
C19: OK, goodbye.
BD: 'Bye. (pause) **Hello...?**
BF: Speaking of comic strips, this is WBAI in New York City.
BD: Say Hi to Merle!
BF: Hello.
C20: Yeah?
BF: Merle?
BD: This is Merle?
BF: Who's this? '
C20: Oh, yeah, hello. Listen, I just called to tell you that I'm turning on to WNCN because, uh, I think you've played, you know, long enough.
BF: You want us to be serious. OK, seriously...
C20: No, no. I just, you know...
BF: Seriously!
BD: Hey, we just went through that other one.
C20: I'm just tired of this, you know. I like to listen into... you know. It was fun but.
BD: Hey, hey, hey, hey... why don't you just... hey, why don't you, hey...
C20: It's time to change.
BD: OK, let her change Hey, hey, what's the next one, Bob?... I was gonna ask...
BF: Push the next one (speaking to Dylan about a button on the console).
BD: Hey, hey, see if there' s not, if there's not four... in the next four calls (laughs) **if you send out one call that says (laughs), that say, that says, uh...**
BF: You are nice!
BD: Yeah...
C20: Yeah.
BD: That we are nice. If there's not one call in the next four, hey, we'll just split, right? We'll just keep 'em all down to a minimum, OK? I don't wanna do anything bad here. I certainly don't wanna be...
BF: OK, you heard him. You heard, uh... WBAI...
C21: Hi! Bob Dylan is beautiful, Bob Fass is beautiful and Radio Unnameable is beautiful.
BF: Well, now, that's only one. That only counts for one.
BD: (laughs)
C21: Hey! OK, so it's only one.
BD: Oh, you, you're very beautiful! (laughs)
BF: You're beautiful too. We can tell by your voice !
C21: Thanks... (?)
BD: You're not like those other people.
C21: Yeah. Oh, I, I, I... it makes me paranoic to be on the radio so... anyway, uh.
BD: Is it all right? I mean, we're not gonna... I'm not gonna be here... we're not gonna be here that long, and believe me... we were just passing by. I don't mean to interrupt any of your music, 'cause I listen to the radio station too, and I know how good it is.
C21: Oh, I don't care about the music.
BD: Huh?
C21: The music's beautiful, but people are more beautiful.
BD: Oh.

C21: So, OK. Get another call. OK?
BD: Yeah, yeah.
C21: OK. Bye-bye.
BF: Would you say this was a good station?
BD: Oh – I'd say it was the best station, yeah. I've al... (?) **people.**
BF: What station? What station?
BD: WBAI! WBAI is the best station... baby! (laughs) **it's what's, uh, occurrin'. It's what's occurring, Slim.** (laughs)
BF: WBAI...
C22: Hi! I don't want to talk to Bob Dylan.
BD: Oh, ha...
C22: I just want to talk to Bob Fass.
BF: Yes?
C22: And state the fact that the reason that I became a member of the WBAI program guide gang is because of Radio Unnameable and its rather casual, uh, attitude towards, uh, its programming. And having things like Bob Dylan come up, and Jose Feliciano, is a big part of it. And hearing them on the air is a big part of Radio Unnameable, and it's absolutely necessary it should be on the air, and don't be discouraged by all these clods that are calling up and saying that it's too long, and all this other jazz.
BD: (laughs)
C22: You're doing a good job.
BF: You've encouraged us!
BD: Oh, that's, yeah, that's great.
C22: And keep it up. As long as you're on, have a ball!
BF: What's your name?
BD: Alan Lomax?
C22: This is Will Fowler.
BF: OK, Will. Bye-bye, thank you.
C22: OK.
BF: Bye-bye.
C22: Keep it up.
BF: Thank you.
C22: Bye-bye.
BF: See? You leapt to a conclusion there.
BD: (laughs)
BF: WBAI...
C23: Um, I'd like to ask one question if I may.
BF: One question; you may.
C23: OK. Did you ride the 'A' train down to WBAI tonight?
BD: Did I? No, no. We came the other way.
C23: You came the other way. You didn't come on the 'A' train?
BD: No.
C23: OK. Thank you.
BF: I think there's more than meets the ear in that telephone call.
BD: Yeah! That sounded very mysterious! I don't know about these telephone calls, Bob... I do not know about any more of these telephone calls!
BF: WBAI...
C24: I'm Donald Martin. I was wondering if I...
BF: Carl Martin (?) isn't here now.
C24: I was wondering, uh, if Bob was working on some plays a while ago? Uh, I was wondering if he'd, uh, finished any of them?
BD: No, no, no.
BF: He said there was a part in it for me too.

BD: Oh, I haven't finished it, Bob. I wrote one... I wrote one, but it's... I'm not doing anything with it. Nothing's happening.

BF: That's the truth behind why I left here, you know, the first time. I told everybody I was fired, but it wasn't really true. See, I quit because I thought I was gonna get a part in Bob Dylan's play!

C24: (laughs)

BD: I wanted Bob... I wanted Bob Fass to play Burgess Meredith!

C24: What other writings have you been doing besides so-and-so? Have you...

BD: Just songs... I did a book. I did a book.

C24: You did? Has it been published yet?

BD: Yeah. And then I'm gonna do... I'm gonna do a TV Special... uh, I'm gonna write that and a movie too, but I'm gonna also help, have some help with some screenwriters.

C24: I heard you were supposed to be working on a movie with Allen Ginsberg. Was that true?

BD: Oh that was just a, a... just a little movie we were just gonna try to make. This is a big movie.

BF: That's the one that was gonna be shot on the Taconic State Thruway?

BD: Yeah.

BF: That was the one you were playing your mother in.

BD: Yeah. Mother Revisited.

C24: Keep up the writing. I like it a lot. Keep the show going. It's very interesting.

BF: Thank you.

C24: Goodbye now.

BF: Thank you. WBAI...

C25: Hi, Uh, Bob Fass, please?

BF: Yeah.

C25: Bob, I'd just like to back up, uh, the man a couple of calls back and tell the gentleman who called a little earlier who had his sister that's such a devoted fan that that's exactly why this thing is on at night. Uh, that you can have guests like Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs, and they can be themselves and, you know jive around with people who are willing to call in, even if they're gonna bitch a little bit just to light a sort of fire or something. I mean that's what it's all about and I don't know why he got so upset. They surely can switch their radio anytime they want to.

BF: OK, thank you.

C25: Right.

BF: Bye, bye. WBAI... Hello...

C26: Hello?

BF: Hello!

C26: Hi, this is... Can I talk to Bob Dylan?

BF: Sure.

C26: Uh, this is Steve Vogl, and... well, first of all I'd like to disagree with that uh, that guy that guy that... guy that said, uh, he liked this sort of thing.

BF: Raoul?

C26: See, I'd like to know how a nice healthy guy with both legs and both arms, who's not a student or anything, uh, can keep from getting drafted!

BD: You, you, y, y... you're a student? And you're being drafted and, and, and, and... and you know somebody that doesn't have any arms or legs?

C26: No, you know like uh, Bob Dylan. You know, nice healthy, healthy guy, you know, not...

BD: (laughs)

C26: ...sick or anything, how, how, how does...

BD: He doesn't know! (laughs)

C26: ...he keep from getting drafted?

BF: No, he doesn't know.

BD: Yeah, well, I'm not going to go into that! (laughs)

C26: You're not going to go into it?
BD: Yeah, no, no. I assure you, uh, uh, I have nothing against the army! (laughs)
C26: You have nothing against the army?
BD: I wouldn't go without, you know, if it was my... if it was my thing or whatever... I don't know, whatever... I don't know like... I just do what I have to do. I really do. I mean, like, I don't, I don't, I don't tell... I don't want people to judge what they think of me, you know, for themselves, you know... so... so sometimes I miss a lot of things that other people get to do. So...
C26: No. I was just wondering whether, you know, you don't have any nice good (lawyer?) to avoid it.
BD: No. I never really think about it. I don't know... I don't... I don't have any id... I don't even have any idea.
C26: No, 'cause a lotta guys up at school here are gonna reclassify.
BD: Oh. Well, sure, well... that's their, you know... what can you do?
BF: That's their...
C26: That's their affair, whatever. (?)
BD: Mm.
C26: OK. Well, thanks a lot.
BF: WBAI...
C27: Uh this is Dave Levy. Can I speak to Bob Dylan, please?
BD: Dave Levy?
C27: Yeah.
BD: Old Daily... (laughs) **Not the old Dave Levy?**
C27: Same one!
BD: Same one? Oh-ho... What are you doing?
C27: Who's that?
BD: You never used to listen to the radio! You just sit around houses... I haven't seen you in four years! This is what you've come to, right?
C27: Who are you?
BD: Uh?
C27: Who are you?
BD: Who am I?
C27: Yeah.
BD: This is Dave Levy?
C27: Yeah, right. I...
BD: Old Dave Levy from Housing Project?
C27: No, this is Dave Levy from WNCN.
BD: Oh, WNCN. Oh, wrong cat! Oh, I'm sorry. I almost made a big mistake.
BF: What are you doing listening to another station, Dave Levy from WNCN? This is WBAI in New York City.
C27: I'm trying to talk to Bob Dylan.
BF: Oh, well. You are.
BD: What do you wanna know?
C27: Uh... remember me?
BD: (laughs nervously)
C27: Shall I continue?
BF: Well. It's kind of dark in here. We don't recognize you.
C27: This is Bob?
BD: Yeah, yeah, I remember you.
C27: From 97th Street?
BD: Yeah. You used to wear a tire iron, right?
C27: What?
BD: You used to wear a tire iron?

C27: No!

BD: Around your shoulder, right. You used to come by... you used to always turn the corner there, around from 97th Street? You also used to turn the corner 'round 96th Street, right? Amsterdam Avenue, right?

BF: No. I really do remember this guy. He's the man who stole my Lone Ranger record.

C27: Well, anyway, I still wanna know...

BD: He stole more than that from me. I remember him too, man. He stole a whole apartment up on 95th Street!

BF: (laughs)

BD: He stole every... You copped everything from the pad, right?

C27: What pad, baby?

BD: On 96th Street... (delayed laughter)

BF: He said 'baby'. He said 'baby'.

BD: Yeah, I'm gonna have to have a tracer on this call. I'm really getting... What can I do...? Huh?

C27: *It's All O*... who else was playing on that *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue* side, *It's All Over Now*...?

BD: Oh, that's Bruce Langhorne.

C27: Oh, it is Brucie!

BD: Yeah.

C27: OK, very good.

BD: It's Brucie!

C27: Yeah.

BD: So long.

C27: Tarah!

BF: Bye-bye. His friends call him Bubbles! WBAI...

BD: Who was that kid who just called up?

BF: Hello?

C28: Hello, both Bobs...

BD: Yeah...

BF: Yeah...

C28: Hi. I just wanted to tell you that, um... I don't know, am I number 4 or something? Will you be... I don't know. I just want to tell you that, you know, you're fine and you shouldn't get discouraged by people who don't like you.

BF: Uh, thank you.

BD: Oh, that's very good...

BF: If you turn your radio down you'll find it makes it sorta confu...

C28: Yeah, yeah, it sort of confuses it up – all right.

BF: Everybody that calls Oxford 7-8506 – turn your radios down.

C28: OK. Well, um, you know, it's really interesting and it's... it's just good to hear. I called a little while ago and I'm sitting here sort of burping at the people who were calling in the meantime and criticizing you, 'cause they're sort of narrow minded, I think...

BD: Who's thanking you, Bob?

C28: But you're doin' good stuff.

BF: (to Dylan) They like me. It's you they don't like!

BD: (laughs) **I know! It's a drag sometimes!**

BF: Yeah?

BD: Yeah, they make it very...

C28: Oh well, you're both fine. OK.

BF: See, I told you I could do your career a lotta good.

BD: Isn't the tea gonna come?

BF: No, it hasn't come.

BD: Why shouldn't I sit with that Phil out there? That Phil out there with... with the, uh... what's it... what's... uh... that tattoo on his neck. Ask him if the tea came, or if he drank it all.

BF: WBAI...

C29: Uh, yeah. I'd like to ask Bob Dylan a question.

BF: OK.

C29: Uh yeah. I, uh, was watching the Les Crane Show a long time ago and he said that he was gonna make a movie with Allen Ginsberg.

BD: Oh... no that never came through. We just did a little bit of it. OK?

C29: What happened to it?

BD: Oh we just scrapped it.

C29: Oh, I was looking forward to it.

BD: We didn't have... none of us had the time.

C29: Have you made any attempts on the screen?

BD: Yeah, well, I... I'm in contact with Allen, yeah. He's the...

BF: The footage... the footage was bought by, uh...

BD: Would you see if there's any tea? Hey, Phil, would you see if there's any tea? Please ask, ask, ask, ask.

BF: ...the footage was bought by that Polish director and it's in *Repulsion* right now.

C29: Yeah, right. (laughs) Have you made any other attempts on the screen?

BD: Huh?

C29: Have you, like...

BD: No, no, no. Yeah, pretty soon. In the fall, make a movie. Sometime, I guess...

C29: OK.

BD: 'Bye.

BF: Listen, I think you can... you can probably tell 'em about playing Jack Elliott in the movie... Bob's gonna be playing Jack Elliott in the movie of the same name.

C29: OK, great...

BD: No, no, you got it wrong. I'm gonna be playing Jack Elliott playing Marie Windsor.

BF: Oh, Oh. I knew I had something like that.

BD: Yeah.

BF: WBAI. Hello!

C30: Oh, Good morning!

BF: Good Morning!

C30: Uh, I'd like, uh, Mr Dylan to give a free plug for his television Special that he mentioned and, uh, let us all know when he's going to be on.

BD: Oh!

BF: OK...

BD: Oh, well, it... Uhh... gee, I don't know the date of it, uh, it's not a plug really. I just said it, you know, because... they asked me. Uh... it'll be in the papers, I guess. It's gonna be an hour long. It's on... Well, I really shouldn't say much about it at all. It'll be in the papers, you know.

C30: Oh, all right then.

BD: It's in a couple of weeks, I guess.

C30: And I'm enjoying the program, so that makes number 5.

BD: Oh!

C30: OK, goodnight.

BF: Oxford 7-8506, to register your approval or disapproval.

BD: Are you, are you still with us, man?

BF: But of course. WBAI...

BD: I guess we'll stay for a little while.

C31: Uh I'd like to speak to uh... is it Bob Dylan or Bob Fass? Hello?

BF: Well. You'd better make up your mind!

BD: I don't know if I'll speak to him, man.
C31: Uh... uh...
BF: No, I'll speak to him.
C31: Hello!...
BF: Yeah?
C31: Is this Bob Fass?
BF: Yeah!
C31: Yeah! Well I didn't think I'd get on that fast! Uh, because I tried it before and you had a coupla busy signals and the line was really tied up.
BF: Yeah?
C31: But I just thought I'd say I really enjoy your program, and you've been keeping me up all night long just listening to it every night. And, uh, I'd like to speak to Bob Dylan.
BD: Uh, huh.
BF: OK, you are.
BD: Well, this is Bob Dylan.
C31: Yes... uh, I'm getting quite a bang out of listening to you talk.
BD: Oh!
C31: And it's, uh, fascinating! It's about all I can say, and I think the program is great. I think you are pretty good too, and besides, I'm a pretty...
BD: Oh, oh, thanks.
C31: ...old guy to be listening to this type of thing.
BD: Well thank you.
C31: So that's something in your favor.
BF: I hope you get a lot older!
C31: (laughs) I'm getting a lot younger, listening to it.
BF: OK, that too.
C31: OK, thank you.
BF: Bye-bye. WBAI...
C32: Uh, good morning.
BF: Good Morning.
C32: First of all, Bob, uh, I really like your program a whole lot. I usually call you up about this time some evenings, to tell you that I'm doing a paper and, uh, Mr. Dylan? Uh, I think your writing is real great, and you play the kazoo and guitar real great but it would be real...
BF: The kazoo?
C32: ...real greater if you could, you know, just kinda sing a little bit better.
BD: Huh. Well, I appreciate that! (laughs). I'm always looking for good, crisp, solid... good solid rock bottom foundational criticism. And that just sinks it right in.
C32: 'Cause whenever I hear you sing... it's... I just... but I think your songs are really great.
BF: You know, not everybody has the courage to tell Bob the truth.
BD: Not everybody has the courage to sing like I do! (laughs)
C32: OK, thank you.
BD: 'Bye.
BF: 'Bye-bye. A controversial cat, you know that? WBAI...
BD: That's one of your phrases.
C33: Oh, OK; can I listen to a recording, please?
BF: Sure.
BD: Yes.
C33: Hello. Mr Dylan, do you know if crickets dream?
BD: Crickets Dream? (thinking it to be a group)
C33: Yeah.
BD: No, I've never heard of it. No.
C33: You don't know if they dream or not?

BD: Oh, if crickets dream? How would I know?
C33: Well, I just thought you might know, I mean...
BD: No, I don't know.
BF: I've just gotta sit there in the control room, Bob. We have to change the tape in about four minutes.
BD: Oh, OK. Why don't you go play a record? Why don't you play a record?
BF: OK, we'll play a record now.
BD: Yeah.
C33: Are you still on?
BD: Yeah.
BF: Yeah..
BD: Oh, we're gonna say goodbye now, though.
BF: What if crickets dream?
BD: I don't know. I've never heard if crickets dream. This... this guy... this guy must be well shot... (?)
C33: No, but crickets, you know... that's kind of interesting if you find out about animals though.
BD: Huh?
C33: If you find out all about animals, then you know how... you know all about people...
BD: Yeah. Ha, ha, ha. You believe that? (laughs)
C33: See, I don't live in New York City, and...
BD: Yeah, well, you're a pretty smart fellow. (laughs)
C33: Thanks.
BD: Yeah. OK, keep it up now.
C33: OK; 'bye.
BD: Goodbye.
BF: Bye-bye.
BD: Yeah, the world's gonna be saved by cats like him... who examine animals.
BF: There's no place around here that's open now Bobby.
BD: Oh. Are we still on the radio?
BF: Oh, yeah. There's a taxi driver who listens sometimes.
BD: Oh, God.
BF: When we say we're hungry or thirsty he brings us food and drink.
BD: See, none of these people are our real friends that are calling us. They're just calling up to, oh to... to keep themselves up...
BF: Yeah. Is Myrie Josephson near a turntable? Maybe he can play a record.
BD: They're certainly not bringing us anything. Well, we'll just talk to this one... this one person here, that's right in the middle. Can we answer the call?
BF: Sure. Answer this one last call.
BD: OK. Hello?
C34: Oh hello. WBAI?
BD: Yeah.
C34: Hello. It's nice to be on. The busy signal sounded so good recently! I'd like to ask Bob Dylan if he'd like to say hello to some fans of his in England.
BD: Sure!
C34: I'm recording this on tape and I'll be sending a dub over to them...
BD: (laughs)
C34: ...as soon as I can. They're Linda Bennett and Tony Bennett over in Basildon, England.
BD: (laughs)
C34: Tony Bennett... not the singer.
BF: Not the Tony Bennett?
BD: Oh, God... what am I gonna get into here...?
BF: Another Tony Bennett. This guy's not the real Tony Bennett.

BD: OK. Listen, uh, I wanna say hello to all my fans there, and tell them Tony Bennett loves them! And... uh... and, gee, I just...

BF: (singing a Tony Bennett song)

BD: They've just bought... I'm looking forward to another hit as big as my last one, one about San Francisco. And, uh... I recently have been doing a lotta research and I've got another hit and just tell all my English fans that I just love them and... and think of them, and can't wait to get back there and play again in my old, uh...

BF: Keep those cards and letters coming.

BD: Yeah, just keep 'em coming. Keep 'em coming and...

C34: By the way, are you going down to Philadelphia?

BD: I remember you. Mmm! (blows a kiss) **Yes. Philadelphia... No.**

C34: Yeah. I was wondering just in case you ever happen to be down Philadelphia some Saturday night with nothin' to do...

BD: Yeah... (laughs)

C34: ...would you like to stop into WRTI-FM in, uh, Temple University?

BD: Oh, man! I couldn't wait.

C34: We have a folk show. We'd love to have you.

BD: Oh, I'll be there, you know, the minute I get within... within driving range. And, uh, if I got nothin' to do I'll be right there!

C34: Yeah. Park Avenue, North.

BD: Right. OK, I got it. Park Avenue...

BF: I think we've got it now... (?)

BD: OK, 'bye now.

C34: OK. 'bye then. '.

BF: Bye-bye.

BD: Oh, I'm j...

BF: OK; we're gonna... Listen call back a little later. We'll go... as soon as we've changed the tape and played some records.

BD: Oh, will you play a Lightnin' Hopkins record again?

BF: Maybe. OK we have a Lightnin' Hopkins cued up again.

BD: Oh, play this Fugs record! Play *Nothing*.

BF: Uh... No, I don't think I'll play *Nothing*. There's that old FCC.

BD: Oh, you mean it's dirty? It's a dirty song?

BF: Yeah, well, it's not.

BD: No, that's not a dirty song.

BF: ...duty...

BD: You know they banned a lotta my songs, you know? You know that?

BF: Who did? Who did?

BD: Oh, a lot of the songs on my last album were...

BF: Which ones?

BD: Whole lot of them...

The Lightnin' Hopkins record plays, and the tape recording cuts

BF: OK, we're back.

BD: You tell... Oh.

BF: We're back on the air. What were you gonna say, Bob?

BD: No, I forgot.

BF: You forgot? Hey, Bob... Bob, you don't like our... the way we sign off huh? 'Bye-bye', it's terrifying?

BD: Yeah, yeah: frightening.

BF: Yeah?

BD: Well, I don't wanna get into that, though. Why don't you just do what you're gonna do?

BF: You wanna take some more calls?
BD: Uh, I don't know. That doesn't matter to me. I'm not necessarily looking forward to it.
BF: You made a record today?
BD: Yeah.
BF: That we can't put... I just heard it, and we can't play it on the air.
BD: Oh yeah. That's too bad.
BF: Not because it's dirty or anything like that, but it isn't released yet.
BD: Yeah.
BF: But I heard it, and I can... I've memorized it and I'll sing it... I'll sing it.
BD: Ha. You would!
BF: (laughs) But it's not copyrighted!
BD: That's right.
BF: OK, we'll take some more calls. Oxford 7- 8506, ooh! There they are – ha, WBAI...
C35: Hi. May I speak to Bob Dylan, please?
BD: I don't hear anything on my...
BF: You don't hear anything?
BD: No.
BF: Hey... how about now?
BD: Huh? What?
BF: How about now, Bob?
BD: You'd better tell the person to say something.
C35: Bob?
BF: Hello?
BD: I can't hear anything...
C35: Is that Dylan?
BF: Well, we're having a little trouble here. .
BD: Can you hear it?
BF: Take that other earphone there, Bob.
BD: Well, maybe these earphones aren't plugged in.
BF: Try that one. This one doesn't work.
BD: Oh.
C35: Hello?
BF: Hello?
C35: Yeah. OK, OK, all right.
BD: I'll change (?) **with you, OK? Oh, I can hear him now. OK I'll change** (?) **with you.**
C35: Um, d'you remember back about your third album, um, you know, you were sort of...
BD: Hey, let Robbie hear some way. Is there some way...
BF: OK, see if you can... Sorry, excuse us for just a moment. We're having what we call in the trade 'technical difficulties', right.
C35: Yeah, right.
BF: You've heard the term before right? Robbie, find a place underneath the table that you can plug those into and, uh...
BD: Is this the right place here? Is there a double place over here, man?
BF: Yeah.
BD: OK.
BF: Just another interesting, uh, glance behind the scenes...
BD: Oh, oh.
BF: ...radio, and the work that goes on behind the scenes of...
BD: ...a bit further down...
BF: ...of radio there, where people are down on the floor...
BD: ...did you see anything?
BF: ...roaming around on their hands and knees...
BD: ...Plug it in which way they were before...

BF: ...Looking for places to plug in.. Hello! Somebody put a light on, so that we can see. We still can't see...

BD: ...no...

BF: Yeah, it's right here, right here, here we are. There's the place, it's uh... Things are very primitive at WBAI, you probably, uh, found out by now.

BD: Can you hear now?

RR: Yeah.

BF: Can you hear now? Good, good. OK. Hello?

C35: Hello?

BF: You were asking a question.

C35: Yeah. Uh, Bob?

BD: Yeah.

C35: Um, can you remember back about your... I think your third album, when you were writing, uh, you know, *Masters Of War* and those songs like that?

BD: That was the second album.

C35: Uh, the second? Oh, no, third was *God On Our Side*, yeah right. Well you, know, like that.

BD: Yeah.

C35: Um... I... you know, I guess you were probably being pretty sincere then, like that, and since then your music has changed and...

BD: No, I haven't changed, you've changed.

C35: No, no. I said your music has changed.

BD: No, my music hasn't changed. I'm not saying... I'm just using other people playing with me. Same music.

C35: Yeah. No, no, no... come on, don't goof on me.

BD: (together with BF) **We're not goofing on you!**

BF: He's not goofing on you!

BD: Other people are just playing with me; the songs are the same!

BF: I can't understand this! I listen to the record and I hear the same thing!

C35: No, I mean...

BF: I hear the same thing, and I think, maybe, something deeper.

C35: Well, uh...

BD: I mean, I'm not... I'm not defending myself in...

C35: No, no, no, no, I don't want you to.

BD: ...in saying that I haven't changed; but I'm just saying you're lookin' at the wrong thing.

C35: Yeah yeah, no no... I don't want you to defend yourself, no. But you see, the thing is... well, that's not my main question. Like, uh, when you wrote those songs like that, there was, like, Vietnam... it wasn't as big as it is now... and questioned and...

BD: I never wrote songs about those kinda things. I only wrote one specific... no, two – two specific songs about anything.

C35: Well, no, no... Like, like... No, I'm not asking you to be a Phil Ochs, you know! But, like... like, *God On Our Side*...

BD: Yeah.

C35: ...for a... that's just one... yeah, you know...

BD: Oh, God, man! That's just like... *With God On Your Side* is contained in like, you know, like two lines of something like *Desolation Row*.

C35: Yeah, yeah, right!

BD: That whole song is in there. I mean, I managed to get two I... you know, in two lines. I mean, if you can't pick it out or single it out, that's not my problem.

C35: Yea, yeah, yeah, all right. What I'm saying... what I'm saying is, like... like it's a lot more subtle... there. I, I think it is.

BD: It's not, it's not.

BF: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Which one do you think is more subtle?

C35: Pardon?
BF: Which one do you think is more subtle?
C35: Something like, um, something like *Desolation Row*...
BD: It's not more subtle! It's just more to the point. It's just more... it's just more... it doesn't spare you any time to, you know, to string the thing together. It is all together. It doesn't... it doesn't pretend like it has to do anything, that's all.
C35: Yeah, well...
BD: Hey, I don't know... I can't talk about what I do. I'm not gonna...
C35: Well no, no, no... well, take, like, the Forest Hills concert...
BD: Huh? Oh.
C35: Like at the Forest Hills concert, I was there, just after Newport. And, like most of *Desolation Row* you had... like, you know, kids screaming and, uh, laughing, you know, and...
AK: No, they were quiet!
BD: Well I wasn't... that's not my problem. I can't worry about what the audience is gonna do. I... Hey, come on – what do I care?
C35: Well, anyway, uh, the main question is this, the one that I wanted to get to, like, uh you know, I'm not saying, like...
BD: Anyone got a cigarette? Thanks.
C35: ...live all these problems like they get now, like, don't live the war and all this. But it seems like... I remember during the summer there was a sing-in and a lotta people were there, are, you know, it was strange. Uh...
BD: Well, I don't sing on the stages with other people. I don't go on stage with a bunch of other people. Well, I... Oh, I could do that...
C35: Yeah, yeah, well no, the thing is... you sound like you're getting awful defensive. I mean ... I'm not trying to...
BD: I never went on stage with a bunch of other people. Don't... What are you saying? Are you saying I should be on stage with a bunch of other people?
C35: Well, well... I don't know... Yeah, I was wondering how come you're not...
BD: Oh, 'cause I don't do it, that's all.
C35: ...how come you're not, you know, doing something now. I mean, you know about it? I mean...
BD: About what?
C35: Uh... well... yeah, OK, yeah, there's very little anybody can do about... (?)... you know, to take the war, OK? There's very little anybody can do about it.
BD: So what can anybody do about it? It's a war, it's a war!
C35: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but, you know, something!
BD: Hey, wars have been around for a long time. What makes you think this is anything special?
C35: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but, you know... yeah, but guys are dying now!
BD: 'Course guys... guys have always died.
C35: And, and it just seems like, you know, a couple of years back, uh if...
BD: Well, have you... What grade are you in?
C35: Were you at Washington?
BD: W... Washington, where?
C35: At the, uh, Civil Rights march? Yeah, I know 'which one?' You know, you know, the...
BD: That was that one a long time ago... the huge big gigantic one?
C35: Yeah, yeah...
BD: I was there, yeah.
C35: Yeah, and, like, you know, you...
BD: Well, that didn't take much courage to really go there, like, when there's...
C35: No, I'm not saying courage.

BD: ...like, three hundred thousand people there too! I mean, don't, don't, don't think I'm sticking up for any kind of minority rights; I mean, three hundred thousand people isn't any kind of minority, man, you know!

C35: I'm not trying to, you know, put you up as some kind of hero like that. But it's just that now, uh, like, like, you... I imagine you were sincere then, I mean I don't think you were...

BD: No! I don't know what you mean. Like, I'm not gonna go out 'n' picket anything, if that's what you mean.

C35: Well, I don't know, I just think you...

BD: Well if you can't... give me one reason why I should, then I'd do it, but...

C35: Well (laughs), well, if I have to give you a reason why I should... well, then I guess I'd better not ask anything that...

BD: No, no, it's not... you know, it's none of my doings... I really do other things. I'm not like you (laughs)**.**

C35: Yeah, yeah, yeah, well...

BD: And I'm very... I'm very tied up in a lot of other... lot of other, uh, daily, uh... exercises. And then my mind just does not work, uh.

C35: No, I realize that, but...

BD: Thinking about the troubles of the world! I mean, like it's, you know... who am I to think about...

C35: Yeah, yeah, but you were...

BD: ...to carry the world on my shoulders... Huh?

C35: You were... you, like, uh, when you were writing these more obvious protest...

BD: Ah, yeah, well all the stuff that I'm writing now – I just never wrote as songs, that's all. I can't, you know...

C35: ...like, like, uh, *Pawn In Their Game*. I remember...

BD: Yeah, well... I did it because that was the thing. That's what I was involved in. If you're interested really, you know, I mean, for what it's worth. There's no big hoax or any kinda secret thing happening, or any kind of plan from the beginning. I just did what was hap... I played rock and roll music, you know when I was sixteen... fifteen years old!

C35: No. no, I'm not, I'm not puttin' down your rock n' roll...

BD: Well... well, I quit doing it, you know. I quit doing it because, uh, it just wasn't... I couldn't make it. You know, like, it's just too hard. It was just too... it's different now. The music field is different now than it used to be. People that're... that actually have, have... who actually make money in it now are not necessarily old people where they used to be. They used to be just old people that smoked cigars and hung around in certain bars, uh, uptown, you know, around Tin Pan Alley. Well, that used to be the music thing. But it's not that anymore... I mean, no, don't put down rock and roll. I mean I don't even know what it is. I don't play rock and roll, first of all, if you think I do.

C35: I didn't put down rock and roll but, like, take March 17th, you know, where it's... no...

BD: Oh, oh where – this March?

C35: Yeah, in Washington this...

BD: Oh, oh, why... Come on, I ain't going to march nowhere. I got things to do.

C35: But, hell, you know; I mean, if you... I'm sorry! If you, uh... you know 'cause, 'cause it's...

BD: Hey, listen, I'm not... Do you see me in politics? Am I in politics? Or am I anybody's parents? Am I any... am I any mother or father to anybody? Who do you think I'm supposed to be responsible for? I didn't create any living person that walks around.

C35: No, no, no, but if you... if... I'm not asking you to live like that. But if you felt enough about it two Or three years ago, you know, why not now? Or have you just changed?

BD: Well, I don't know what I was thinking about two or three years ago. I don't know... I have to explain it to you – it's not so complicated, man. You don't even have to ask why – it's very simple, but, like, I just don't feel like sitting here talking about it right now.

C35: Oh, OK. I'm sorry.

BD: No. I'll talk to you some other time, but...

C35: Yeah, yeah – OK.

BD: 'Bye.

C35: 'Bye.

BF: Hey Bob...

BD: What?

BF: Once you said to me... one night you said to me in a, in a... in a private thing... uh, you said to me that Marlon Brando could've been President.

BD: I did?

BF: Yeah, you did.

BD: Huh.

BF: You did.

BD: I know Marlon Brando... I know him, I know him.

BF: Yeah... What did you mean by that?

BD: Huh?

BF: What did you mean by that?

BD: Well, I'm sure I said it before I knew him.

BF: Yeah.

BD: I wouldn't say the same thing now!

BF: Yeah?

BD: Oh. I meant that he probably... no, I don't... I didn't think... I don't think I meant that he could be President, or might've...

BF: Well, like, you felt that he was a gr... he was a kinda tremendous voice or leader...

BD: No, I said Marlon Brando and his kind maybe could've been President. I necessarily did not mean Marlon Brando specifically.

BF: Yeah.

BD: I'm just saying that people like that... But who wants to be President? Who wants to?

BF: What do you wanna do Bob?

BD: Well, I just wanna be here right now, and leave the same way I came in. (laughs) **That's all I wanna do.**

BF: Well, a lot of people want to know. WBAI... hello?

C36: Hello.

BF: Yeah.

C36: Is this Bob Ross?

BF: No, it's not Bob Ross.

BD: You got the wrong number!

C36: No, uh, Bob. What do you think of John Hammond's Country Blues album?

BD: I've never even heard it. Never even heard of it!

C36: You've never heard it?

BD: No!

C36: Oh come on!

BD: I, I've heard... I know John Hammond but I don't know anything about.. I've only heard... I only knew two, uh... I remember one album they made – his first album. I haven't heard anything else.

C36: Well then, you're out of it 'cause you haven't heard his album.

BD: Yeah, I guess so.

BF: Yes, he's out of it, yeah.

BD: Am I missing a lot?

C36: Quite a bit.

BD: Oh, my God!
C36: Quite a bit.
BD: Heaven help me. Is... I'll... I'll tell you, I'll make a special attempt. I don't want...
BF: I wonder if there's a record fair open now? Hey, Bob...
BD: Will it change me? Do I, do I need...
C36: I don't want it to change you.
BD: Well I mean... but, like will it just turn me around? Will it take me on some kind of trip?
C36: No. It'll turn you on. It won't turn you around.
BD: Oh. Is John Hammond better than Otis Redding?
C36: I dig Otis Redding too but, you know, that's two different bags.
BD: Uh-huh...
BF: Two different bags?
C36: Right.
BD: Well, what's Otis Bedding's bag?
C36: Well, he's the real thing.
BD: What's John Hammond?
C36: He's... No, that was a bad statement. Uh...
BD: What's Otis Redding's...
C36: Otis Redding's 'down home', you know?
BD: Yeah. What's John Hammond?
C36: And John Hammond is white... white city blues singer trying to interpret 'down home'.
BD: What's Muddy Waters?
C36: Muddy Waters is 'way down home' – like, Delta...
BD: Oh. What's, uh?
C36: And Otis Redding's Nashville, you know?
BD: What's Jimmy Rushing?
C36: Jimmy Rushing. I'm not familiar with him.
BD: Oh. He's city. (laughs)
C36: He's city.
BD: Yeah. What's... and what did you say John Hammond was again? Let's keep this in mind.
C36: He's a...
BD: A white boy interpreting 'down home'.
C36: ...who digs the blues...
BD: Yeah.
C36: ...who's trying to dig the blues...
BD: Hey. Well.
C36: But he's interpreting it in his own way.
BD: Yeah, well... what do I owe anybody that's an interpreter?
C36: You don't owe anybody anything!
BD: I mean, especially if it's something which I can understand, right? You see, if I can understand something, and I know something, you know, and I like it, and it's real and I know it's real, I mean, like, what use have I to listen to somebody else who... who's doing the same thing only he's not doing it as...
C36: He's not doing the same thing! He's not. He's not just mimicking him...
BD: Oh, I didn't say he was. I didn't say he was.
C36: You implied it.
BD: But isn't all his material that way?
C36: What?
BD: Isn't all that... isn't his material all 'down home'?
C36: Sure.
BD: Then it follows, he's just interpreting it then, right? He's an actor.
C36: Uh...

BD: Right?
C36: No, everybody's an actor...
BD: But he feels it? He feels it down... down deep in his soul? Does it, you know...
C36: No, not the way Otis Redding does, or Muddy Waters. What John Hammond does...
BD: Can you see it comin' in from his... from his brain? Does he have a headband around his head or what?
C36: What? If he can say or feel like...
BD: Hey, well, if you like him, hey, that's fine! Y'know...
C36: Well, I'm tryin' to put you on to him! I think you might like him.
BD: Well... hey, you don't have to put me on to him. That's OK... I'll... I'll, you know... I'll keep... if I come across it I'll listen to it.
C36: Right, OK. That's all I wanted to know.
BD: Yeah.
C36: OK, thanks a lot.
BF: Bye-bye, John. WBAI...
BD: (to someone else) **You're going to what?**

Unknown voice "Tenth Street."

BD: Yeah, I'll go with you! Yeah. I'll go with you, man. We'll go back down.
C37: Hello. Is Bob Dylan there? Hello?
BF: Yeah? Uh, what time is... This is the last call, 'cause Bobby's gotta go.
C37: Yeah, all right.
BD: Hey, I'm gonna have to go. Yeah, what is it?
BF: Both Bobs have gotta go!
C37: OK. Listen, this is Dick Lourie. The thing I wanna ask is, I've been tryin' to get... I'd like to get permission, um, to put a text of one of Dylan's songs in a magazine. Uh...
BD: What magazine?
C37: It's called *Thing*. It's a – it's a small... it's a poetry magazine.
BD: Well, what song?
C37: I was thinking – *Like A Rolling Stone*.
BD: Oh. Yeah, well, you can do that!
C37: I can do that? Well...
BD: Yeah. Well, you can. What's your name?
C37: My name is Lourie. L-O-U-R-I-E...
BD: Well, well, hey, I'll tell you what... I don't know... I don't know anything about it – you'll have to call up, uh... you can do it if you wanna do it, you know, but...
C37: Well, the thing is, I tried to get hold of your manager a coupla times and it's very hard, you know...?
BD: Yeah.
C37: ...like, to get to talk to him and to get any permission and stuff like that.
BD: Well... w, w... what's your name?
C37: My name is Lourie. L-O-U-R-I-E.
BD: Well, uh, you... Why don't you call him up again and, and, uh...
BF: Hey, Bob – I'll tell you what...
BD: No, let me tell him... I'll just tell him something, like how to do it.
BF: Oh, yeah – you tell him.
BD: I know the magazine; I've read his magazine and I know somebody that had it. I was looking at it. *Things*, is that the name of it?
C37: Yeah, *Things*, it's called.
BD: Oh. Yeah, it's... Uh, uh, uh – what you have to do is call up the number which you usually call, you know.
C37: Yeah.

BD: **...and, uh... you know, and uh, just leave word there. Just call up and say who you are, and somebody will call you back...**
C37: OK.
BD: **...about what your business is...**
C37: I'll do that. I'll do that next week.
BD: **...I'll just look after it. All right? Somebody will call you back, I guess, and give you permission.**
C37: All right. Would you... Can you leave my name there and... later?
BD: **Yeah, yeah. Yeah, what is it?**
C37: It's Lourie. L O-U-R-I-E.
BD: **Yeah, OK Lourie.**
C37: Richard.
BD: **Richard, right.**
BF: Hey, I thought you didn't do business over the telephone!
BD: **Yeah, I don't. I gotta go – 'bye.**
C37: It ain't business, it's free!
BD: **Yeah, so long, 'bye.**
C37: So long.
BF: It's OK.
BD: (to Bob Fass) **Yeah, I'll take one more if you want...**
BF: You wanna take another one? Sure.
BD: **I'll stand up and take one more.**
BF: OK.
BD: **Right. Are you gonna pull this up?**
BF: No, we can't, we can't... Don't put... Come on over here to this microphone, Bob. Come on over here if you wanna stand...
BD: **OK. We'll just go now you know. Oh this won't stretch. I'll just stand here and do some on this side.**
BF: OK. One more call. WBAI...
C38: Yes, Mr. Dylan?
BD: **Yes...**
C38: Uh, if I mention Hazard to you, what comes to your mind?
BD: **Hazard?**
C38: Yeah.
BD: **Uh, red flag on... on a... on a panel truck going down a highway?**
C38: No, I mean Hazard, Kentucky.
BD: **Hazard, Kentucky... ah, I don't know, is it like. Is it like Bilmont, Kentucky?**
C38: No. I just wanted to see what your reaction was.
BD: **Oh, how about Benmont, Kentucky... if I mention Bilmont or Reading Kentucky? If I mention Reading, Kentucky, what's your reaction?**
C38: Uh... Same as if you said Ashland, Kentucky.
BD: **What's that?**
C38: Some small, uh, coal mining town.
BD: **No you're wrong!**
C38: OK.
BD: **You never heard of it? You never heard of... you never heard of Reading, Kentucky.**
C38: Yeah.
BD: **You have. What about Bilmont?**
C38: I don't know what...
BD: **They're very small towns – they're in the mountains too.**
C38: Yeah – I just wanted to...
BD: **They're just like Hazard.**
C38: Pardon me?

BD: You don't... you should, you should, find out about all those towns, they're all the... they're all around there. You shouldn't just know about Hazard, man. Hazard's just a... Hazard's just a propaganda.

C38: No, but the reason I mentioned this, uh, a friend of mine went hitching down to, uh, to...

BD: Hazard.

C38: ...Hazard, Kentucky, and I thought it was kinda stupid.

BD: Yeah, it was, probably.

C38: Like if you want to get down there in this weather, you might as well take a bus or something.

BD: Yeah, you might as well take a train.

C38: Yeah, he kinda like, froze..

BD: Yeah... OK. I'll see you later.

C38: OK.

BD: Bye now.

C38: Bye.

BD: OK. I guess we're gonna have to go, Bob.

BF: Thanks for coming up, Bob.

BD: Well, thank you very much for...

BF: Thanks for sparing...

BD: ...for uh...

BF: Thanks for playing the record for me. How soon will we have it?

BD: This record?

BF: Yeah.

BD: Oh, I guess it should be out in about, uh... They were gonna have it... it's a rush job. We've just made it.

BF: Mm.

BD: It's a single. We're into making an album, you know, and this one's the only thing we came out with in, like, three days. So... so, like, gonna have to forget about the album for right now. It's, it's, it's, uh... it's very good, the single. It's better than the last two, you know, and... and it's just as good as *Like A Rolling Stone*. And... in a lot of ways it's better, yeah?

Unknown voice – "Yeah".

BD: It is better.

Unknown voice – "Could say that".

BD: Yeah. And it's cleaner.

Unknown voice – "Without rush".

BD: ...(?)... **here, that's all.**

BF: Thank you. There'll be two of them coming out won't there?

BD: Huh?

BF: There'll be two of them coming out...

BD: Two what?

BF: Records have two sides.

BD: Oh, well... I don't think so. They're gonna cut it though, probably... only in New York do they cut it. They don't cut it anywhere else. Only do they cut it in New York because a lot of money is tied up in the advertising. And so that's why they cut it. And, uh...

BF: You don't know what's going to be on the flip... side?

BD: On the flipside is some song from the last album. Probably *Queen Jane Approximately*. That'll probably be on the flipside, but... that's... I always do that, you know. I was gonna put *Positively 4th Street* on the other side, but, uh... I didn't figure anybody could understand it so... What can you do? Want to take one more? If it's somebody very nice and sweet, man.

BF: How can you tell...?

BD: Hey, why don't you just answer and find out if it's somebody that's sweet?

BF: OK. Pick up the...

BD: Somebody that's gentle. Just... just anybody that's gentle.

BF: You wanna talk to somebody who'll bid you a sweet goodnight...

BD: No, no, we'll just... yeah, yeah, we'll just... yeah, whoever, yeah. Let's, like, just pick up one at random.

BF: Hello, Random...

BD: Hello. He don't sound very gentle to me!

C39: Yeah, I'd like to speak to Mr. Dylan.

BF: Will you turn your radio down, please sir?

C39: Hello?

BF: Turn your radio down, please.

C39: All right. Uh... I've turned the radio down.

BD: (presumably to Al Kooper) **Sorry to keep you up so late, you know. You have no work tomorrow night, huh?**

C39: Uh hello?

BF: Hello. Yes?

BD: Uh, how come it's...

(there is a short break in the recording at this point)

C39: ...anything happens.

BD: Yeah. Well they... they... they've got... they do it you know.

C39: They have to see that you all are entertainers...

BD: Yeah, well...

C39: ...and then, uh...

BD: They all are! (laughs)

C39: Well, that's what I say...

BD: Yeah.

C39: You all are entertainers and I love folk music because I am a Southener myself.

BD: Yeah, well, I appreciate...

C39: I love everything you sing and I love everything that Pete sings...

BD: Uh, huh.

C39: And, um, I just hate to see them try to put you in a certain type of situation where... that you can be called 'communists' and all this type of thing...

BD: Yeah.

C39: ...and I don't think, uh, this has anything to do with communism, because I been with all those people all day today...

BD: Well, whatever... it's...

C39: ...people's stand in the movement.

BD: It don't... it don't... it don't matter, you know? It's like, the sun's gonna rise and the sun's gonna go down and... and, like, whatever happens, man, it's just... you know, it's...

C39: Yeah man.

BD: ...it's gonna... the word's just gonna keep goin' on, man, like... like, really like, who cares really?

C39: Well, OK. Thank you, Bob.

BD: Well, just be good now. You be a good guy. (laughs)

C39: OK. Thank you, Bob, and, uh, uh... I'll pay you for this.
BD: All right. See you, now.
C39: Uh, don't worry about it... As I say, we are not gonna work on *Maggie's Farm* no more.
BD: Well, I say that too!
C39: OK.
BD: OK. So long.
C39: Uh, so long.
BF: OK. Thanks, Bob. You through?
BD: Yeah, yeah, we must go. Hey, thank you for havin' us up here...
BF: Thank you for coming up.
BD: We've taken a lotta peoples time up...
BF: This is WBAI in New York City. We're on...
BD: Oh, that's too bad. Well, call me if you need letters badly about it. Like, I'll pay for any damages and stuff like that...
BF: (laughs) Yeah, well... Just wait downstairs if there's anybody waiting for me with snowballs!
BD: Oh God! Hey, we'll handle it. There's some more of us here tonight.
BF: OK.

Unknown voice – "See you, Bob".

BF: Bye-bye, Bob.
BD: Goodbye.

20 February 1966
Martin Bronstein Interview, Montreal

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 375-378.

Martin Bronstein of the *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation* caught Dylan during the interval of his Montreal concert on February 20th 1966.
Taken from the circulating tape.

MB: Do you say Dylan or Dye-lan?

BD: Oh, I say Dylan, Dyelan or whatever. I say anything you say really.

MB: Did you take it from the Welsh poet?

BD: No, no. That's, er, I guess what you would say a rumor made up by people who like to simplify things. It's, er, it's a name of my family but, er, it's my uncles family. It's not my first father's name. It's a name of my mother's, my mother's side of the family, and it's spelled DILLON, you know, and I, er, changed it from there.

MB: Do you consider yourself a poet or a songwriter?

BD: I don't consider myself either one of those two things. I did when I first heard the words, you know, of course – "songwriter" – you hear that when you're very young. "Poet," I never heard that word really. I never really could think of myself as such until I came to New York and then for a while I did think I was a poet, but I don't consider myself anymore from seeing all the rest of the people who're called poets too and I just don't like to refer to myself as a poet because it puts you in a category with a lot of funny people, you know.

MB: When did you first find yourself writing poetry or verse, or writing?

BD: When I was about eight or nine I wrote; I've been writing for a very long time, I mean, if you can say that. I mean, I'm not... I don't know if other – if most people write when they're eight – or eight or nine, you know, but I actually did write poems at that age, poems, rhymes, you know, for... you know, about the flowers and my mother and stuff like that but... so I've been writing for a while.

MB: What made you start singing?

BD: Er, well, er, I just did it, you know. It was a natural thing to do. I started a long time or two – I started singing after I started writing. I started that when I was about ten – ten or eleven – and started out just country and western – Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell kind of things. Hank Williams I think was just about... had just died, and I started playing some time around there.

MB: Was he one of your first influences?

BD: Yeah. I sang... I tried to sing everything he would sing.

MB: What other influences have you had?

BD: Oh! I've had a lot of people that I tried to do things the way they did. As it stands now there's no influence that maybe I've taken. Ah, I don't really know the extent of their influence that they have on what I do. I've had... Hank Williams was the first influence I would think, I guess, for a longer period of time than anybody else. Er, he influenced ... nobody influenced what I wrote at that age, because I didn't really see anything that anybody wrote... er...

MB: Well let's put it this way. Did you have any idols when you first started writing and singing?

BD: Yeah. Oh yeah. Sure, sure. Well, not when I started writing. When I was singing... I never sang what I wrote until I got to New... until I got to be about eighteen or nineteen. I wrote songs when I was, you know, younger – fifteen – but they were songs. I wrote those... I never sang anything which I wanted to write, you understand. The songs I wrote at that age were just four chords, rhythm and blues songs based on things

that The Diamonds would sing or, you know, The Crew Cuts or the groups of like... *In The Still Of The Night* kind of songs, you know. But, er, well, whatever have you.

MB: What's your reaction to the success that you've had?

BD: I honestly don't have any reactions to it. I've been at it too... I've been doing this too long. It's not... it's an accidental thing really. I never strived for it and I don't plan to accept it, you know, for that much longer a period of time. Er, it's, er, it just works hand in hand, that's all. The money that I do make from the success, it's not as easy as just saying that success brings in money because the money... what the success does... what the money does is to enable you to stay away from the causes of your success, really, if you follow me to some degree.

MB: Dick Gregory said this – that the people who made him famous were people who could only afford 35 cents for a bottle of beer, could no longer afford to see him. Is this what you're trying to say?

BD: Well, yeah, I don't know. I always played for free to those people. Huh, I don't know about Dick Gregory, I never... those people didn't make me famous. I always played for free. The people who made me famous were the people that bought *Blowin' In The Wind* and things like that.

MB: When did you realize this success was happening to you?

BD: This immediate success you're talking about now? Out here? This thing that we're doing?

MB: This thing that's made you world-famous.

BD: Er, not too long ago really. I never really realized it before, you know, four, five, six months ago that I couldn't go into a restaurant. I didn't really know it was that bad, you know. But I mean, I could never think of that because... I mean, it, you know, does tricks with your head where you can't go someplace, you know, where everybody else can go and be left alone. I mean, you can't say... you can't go down to, you know, the all-night drugstore or something and just sit there all night... and, you know, my whole life I'm used to staying out all night in public places. It's all gone now, you know. That's all. Do you have a cigarette now?

MB: Do you resent this?

BD: No, I don't resent it. I have no... I don't feel I have any right to resent it because if I... you know, it's my own fault if I go down there. I have no right to resent people that come up to me and bother me. I don't, you know. I get mad. I'm not saying mad. Sometimes I don't get mad, sometimes I do, it all depends. I usually try not to make it out you know, if I'm, you know, touchy about anything, I don't really like to see anybody.

MB: Let's move on to another point. What particular thing – song – would you say you remember as being a breakthrough for you? Was it *Blowin' In The Wind*?

BD: No, no, it was... the most... d'you mean the most honest and straight thing which I thought I'd ever put across? That reached popularity you mean? There's been a few. There's been a few. Blowin' In The Wind was – to a degree, but I was just a kid, you know, I mean, I didn't know anything about anything at that point. I just wrote that, you know, and that wasn't it really. Mr. Tambourine Man, er... I was very close to that song. I kept it off my third album just because I felt too close to it to put it on you know. That was, but that was a funnier way. The other, if you're talking about what breakthrough is for me, I would have to say, speaking totally, would be *Like A Rolling Stone* because I wrote that after I'd quit. I'd literally quit singing and playing, and I found myself writing this song, this story, this long piece of vomit about twenty pages long, and out of it I took *Like A Rolling Stone* and made it as a single. And I'd never written anything like that before and it suddenly came to me that that was what I should do, you know. I mean, nobody had ever done that before. A lot of people... anybody can write, you know, a lot of the things I used to write. I just wrote 'em first because nobody else could think of writing them, you know. But that's only because I was hungry. So... but nobody

can... I've never met anybody or heard anything... I hear a lot. I mean, I'm not saying it's better than anything else. I'm saying I don't think, you know... I think *Like A Rolling Stone* is definitely the thing which I do, man. That's write songs. I don't like to, I'm not interested any more now. After writing that, I wasn't interested in writing a novel, or, you know, a play or anything. Like, I knew – I just said "Too much". I wanted to write songs, you know, because it was just a whole new category. I mean, nobody's ever really written songs, you know, before. Really. I mean, people have in older days, but those were sonnets and soft troubadour-type things.

MB: Well, I know we're pushing time. You say you no longer can stay out late as you've done all your life. That means one of your pastimes, one of your enjoyments, has been cut down. What does Bob Dye-lan do when he wants to be entertained? Where does he go?

BD: Oh, my God! That's not a half a minute question there. Why'd you ask one that'd take a lifetime? I have half a minute. I can't answer that really.

MB: OK. Let me give it to you in a briefer way. What are some of your pastimes?

BD: My pastimes? I have no pastimes. I have none at all. I just, you know... I can't really name you anything. I could talk to you about it sometime if there's enough time, but I have none. I would love to say, y'know, bowling or sailing or roller-skating or, you know, painting, or I'd love to give you a hobby or something that would once... people would, y'know, turn em on. But really, I can't really tell you anything. What I do is write and sing. I mean, I do it whether, y'know, I'm getting paid for it or whether or not. I mean, that's all I do.

MB: Mr. Dylan, thanks very much. I'll let you back to your audience.

March 1966
Ralph J. Gleason interview for *Ramparts*

source: *Ramparts*, March 1966, pp. 27-34

THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE
by Ralph J. Gleason

One Man with a dream, at Pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a new song's measure
Can trample an empire down.
— Arthur O'Shaughnessy

The first time I saw Bob Dylan, a frail, insolent-looking, scraggy youth standing on a stage singing folk songs. I thought he was a drag. Worse than that, pretentious and only a faint echo of Woody Guthrie.

But listening to that same voice has changed my life, fundamentally.

When I first was exposed to his singing, I didn't hear him, really. I only thought I did. Then, almost by accident, I was swept up in "The Times They Are A-Changin'" and "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" and some of his epic work. Then he came to Berkeley, California, and I hear him. Really heard him. And "hear" is the key word. When I met him I apologized for not digging him at first. **"Y'didn't hear me, that's all,"** he said softly and shook hands.

Bob Dylan's songs and lyrics changed my life because they provided a new, nonideological basis for an attach upon the evils of our society that is linked with the attacks made by other artists but which is, because of his song and because of his youth, particularly effective. **"I write in chains of flashing images,"** Dylan says, and these flashing images seem to me to provide a more serious assault on the structure of the Great Society and upon its hypocrisies and pretensions than any ideology or armed might of a foreign power.

Dylan is a major voice in the entertainment world and it is no accident that his moral position is expressed from that pulpit. The churches have abrogated their responsibility to youth (and are madly trying to get back in the act with jazz priests and beatnik clergy and anything else they can think of, but a square is a square).

Youth has found its own way, a veritable children's crusade led by a slender 24-year-old songwriter, singer and electric guitar player whose song royalties for the first half of 1965 were greater than the combined royalties for that same period of the celebrated Tin Pan Alley heroes, Cole Porter, George Gershwin and Oscar Hammerstein. Bob Dylan songs, recorded by hundreds of artists, are flooding the record stores. His songs blare forth from every radio and every juke box, and his voice is loud in the land, even when he is not singing.

And that voice is unique for what it is saying. Dylan is telling the American audience (and through that audience telling the world) that it is better to make love than to make war, that the only loyalty is to oneself ("thst it is not he or she or them or it that you belong to"), that politics are irrelevant ("you say 'nothin's perfect' an i tell you again there are no politics"), that the leadership cult of the Great Society is a fraud ("don't follow leaders, watch the parkin meters"), that the old-fashioned virtues of hard work and thrift and a clean tongue are obsolete ("money doesn't talk it swears' obscenity who really cares?").

He is saying, in short, that the entire system of Western society, built upon Aristotelian logic, the Judeo-Christian ethic and upon a series of economic systems from Hobbes to Marx to Keynes, does not work.

What he is saying is getting an unbelievable intense reaction from a generation thirsting for answers other than those in the college text books. Students may very well learn more from

Dylan today than from the obsolete educational system, structured by another epoch. "I know I am a better human being for reading Bob Dylan," a high school student wrote me, adding: "I would rather write poetry now than study science." In schools all over the country, students are copying down lyrics of Dylan songs from records and insisting that the English class study them. A Jesuit high school in Sacramento devoted most of an English class one semester last year to the study of Dylan as poetry, and the University of California, like numerous other colleges and universities, has seen students get together themselves to hold unofficial seminars on his poems.

Dylan's assault on Western society has incurred the wrath of critics, poets and spokesmen for the Cultural Establishment. Louis Simpson, himself a prize-winning poet, has said, "I don't think Bob Dylan is a poet at all; he is an entertainer… I am not surprised, though, that American college students consider him their favorite poet; they don't know anything about poetry." Simpson notwithstanding, Dylan has already made the kind of scaring impression upon this generation that any poet in history would have been proud to make. *His* words, not those of Pulitzer Prize winners, are quoted by students, written on walls, pasted in notebooks to demonstrate the fervor of their belief. Other poets, like Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Allen Ginsberg, who have been speaking to the young for years, quite obviously consider Dylan a poet, for they recognize what Dylan is.

Dylan has done the impossible. He has taken poetry out to the streets and put it in on the juke boxes and brought it into the lives of everyone. Surely this is the dream of all poets. Think of having the whole world for an audience, not just a circle of friends — a world audience hanging on your every word. Dylan has done this. He has taken poetry out of the classrooms and out of the hands of the squares. He has discovered how to speak to the youth, and youth is never square.

He is the first poet of that all-American artifact, the juke box, the first American poet to touch everyone, to hit all walks of life in this great sprawling society. The first poet of mass media, if you will. "I am a 39-year-old housewife, mother of three teen-agers, and I love the Dylan songs," reads a typical letter. Up front at a Bob Dylan concert in Berkeley last fall were two Hell's Angels, a couple of university professors, Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, novelist Ken Kesey and others of the hip intelligentsia.

Is Dylan a poet? Even his advocates have their reservations. Ginsberg says Dylan is still hung up having to rhyme words and Ferlinghetti wonders if Dylan would be effective as a poet without the guitar. But the only fundamental dissent comes from those who are not moved by him. Not since Elizabethan days has there been such an amalgam of popular speech and poetry. Dylan has taken the speech of the streets, broken the rules of language and made poetry of it.

One of the reasons why he is hauntingly important to the youth is that he makes one face oneself. You may not "enjoy" a Dylan concert of a Dylan album, but if you hear it, really *hear* it, you have to be affected by it. You cannot ignore it. Like all great art it reaches inside you and its intensity is frightening, too, so that while you are pleasured by it in one sense, you are also fearful for the strength of such a vision. Is Dylan poetry? To me he is. How many lines of the last three Pulitzer poets are quoted by the young? Yes quotes from Dylan ring through everything they do or say today.

As W.H. Auden wrote, "In Memory of W.B. Yeats":

For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its saying where executive
Would never want to tamper; it flows south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

Dylan says: **"These songs aren't complicated to me at all. It's all very clear and simple to me. I know what I'm… what they're all about. There's nothing hard to figure out for me. I**

wouldn't write anything I can't really see. They're all about real people. I'm sure you've seen all the people in my songs at one time or another." Rimbaud, when his mother asked what he meant by "Season in Hell," said: "I mean what it says; literally and in every sense."

Dylan thinks of songs — all songs, his own included — as pictures, "chains of flashing images." Dylan's world is a nightmare world, for the most part. "If my thought dreams could be seen, they'd probably put my head in a guillotine," he wrote. In his world are all sorts of carnival freak show figures: "Einstein disguised as Robin Hood… with his friend, the jealous monk," "the motorcycle black madonna two-wheeled gypsy queen," "Sweet Melinda, the peasants call her the goddess of gloom," "Dr. Filth… his nurse, some local loser, she's in charge of the cyanide hole," "Mack the Finger," etc. Recurring figures in Dylan poetry include the monk, the hunchback, the sideshow geek and clown and Napoleon. It's a gaudy, depressing grotesquerie rivaled only by the inmates of "The Circus of Dr. Lao" or the images of Rimbaud's "Season in Hell."

For Dylan sees the world around him — and this is, I suspect, the core of his attraction for the young — as a world run by a vast machine and by men who are heartless, mechanized men and part of that machine. He signs of alienation, of the emptiness of the adult society; he is the clown, the Napoleon in rags, a Don Quixote riding across a neon-lighted jungle, across the moon country, past lines of empty drive-in movies showing vista-vision pictures of what's happening. The vision is apocalyptical, surrealistic, the images glowing, and he is articulating the realignment of priorities first heralded by the wordless revolt of the jazzmen's horns.

There is something in Dylan for everybody. "You who philosophize disgrace," he screams at the lawmakers in "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll" (a song about the fatal beating given a Negro servant by a Maryland farmer). He sneers at the groves of academe ("the old folks home in the college"), at religion ("the phantom of the opera in the perfect image of a priest"), at Madison Avenue ("grey flannel dwarfs"), at the war machine in "With God on Our Side," at hard work ("I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more… they say sing while you slave, an I just get bored").

The new generation is a lonely one. **"It's always silent where I am,"** Dylan has said, and again: **"There is no love except in silence and silence doesn't say a word."** It is a generation born in the shadow of the Bomb and straining to make sense out of a life governed, stratified by and resting upon assumptions of another age.

In "Desolation Row," Dylan runs through a congeries of bizarre images, including the Titanic sailing with T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound "fighting in the captain's tower while calypso singers laugh at them and fishermen hold flowers." Later in the song he comments: "All those people that you mention, yes, I know them, they're quite lame. I had to rearrange their faces and give them all another name."

Dylan's open use of personal references in his songs has given rise to a whole mythology of in-group stories and interpretations rivaling those of Shakespeare's sonnets. His love songs include, "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue," "Don't Think Twice," "It Ain't Me, Babe," "If You Gotta Go, Go Now," and "All I Really Wanna Do Is, Baby, Be Friends With You." They begin in a slightly acid-touched romantic mood, bittersweet and hipster-cool, then go on into the openly accusatory "Queen Jane Approximately," "Like a Rolling Stone," and "Positively 4th Street." Some of the songs are firmly believed by many to parallel his romance with Joan Baez, the queen of the world of folk song. But then again, one wonders, how many other episodes and how many other individuals might fit? Certainly the sentiments so eloquently expressed — the truth of beauty, the necessity of freedom, the belief in the sanctity of self — fit far more than an individual romance. They speak directly to the love-hopes of the young and they speak in a language the young understand.

Dylan has said it in his own way:

"What folk music is, it's not depression songs and these kind of things… its foundations aren't *folk*, its foundations aren't 'slave away' and all this. Its foundations are —

except for Negro songs which are based on that and just kinds overlapped — the main body of it (folk music) **is just based on myth and the Bible and plague and famine and all kinds of things like that which are just nuthin but mystery and you can see it in all the songs — roses growin right up out of people's hearts and naked cats in bed with, y'know, spears growing right out of their backs and y'know seven years of this and eight years of that and it's all really something that nobody can really touch… ."**

Teenagers recognize in Dylan one of their own, a spokesman for their rejection of the adult world. "Look out kid, it's something you did god knows what but you're doin it again." That line is from Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues," a song that was on every juke box in the country. No one under parental authority (or any authority *in loco parentis*) needs to intellectualize the empathy he feels for that line. Of for: "Them that must bow down to authority that they do not respect in any degree, who despise their jobs, their destiny, speak jealously of them that are free, cultivate what they get to be nothing more than something they invest in."

Dylan describes a world in which naturalness is forbidden, creativity is the enemy and beauty is assassinated. Youth, struggling to keep from growing up absurd in a land of TV commercials and high-rise rapacity, sees this same world and sees, too, that we adult numbers accept it.

"At midnight all the agents and the superhuman crew come out and round up everyone that knows more than they do; then they bring back them to the factory where the heart-attack machine is strapped across their shoulders, and then the kerosene is brought down from the castles by insurance men who go check to see that nobody is escaping to Desolation Row." Youth knows intuitively that this is a true State-of-the-Union megssage.

But Dylan's world is not all Desolation Row. Listen to these lines from "Mr. Tambourine Man":

"Take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind, down the foggy ruins of time, far past the frozen leaves, the haunted, sheltered trees, out to the windy beach, far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow."

Or these lines from an album cover:

for i am runnin in a fair race
with no racetrack but the nite
an no competition but the dawn.

or

for my road is blessed
with many flowers
an the sounds of flowers

or

for all people laugh
in the same tongue
and cry
in the same tongue

or

it's just one big world of songs
an they're all on loan
if they're only turned loose t sing

or

lonely? Ah yes
but it is the flowers an the mirrors
of flowers that now meet my
loneliness
an mine shall be a strong loneliness
dissolving deep
t the depths of my freedom
an that, then, shall
remain my song.

"I try to harmonize with words the lonesome sparrow sings," he wrote at one point; and later, "My songs're written with the kettledrum in mind / a touch of any anxious color. unmentionable. obvious. an people perhaps like a soft brazilian singer… i have given up at making any attempt at perfection."

"My poems are written in a rhythm of unpoetic distortion / divided by pierced ears. false eyelashes / subtracted by people constantly torturing each other, with a melodic purring live of descriptive hollowness — seen at times thru dark sunglasses and other forms of psychic explosion, a song is anything that can walk by itself / i am a songwriter. a poem is a naked person… some people say i am a poet."

"The songs are insanely honest," Dylan wrote to a friend, "not meanin t twist any heads an written only for the reason that i myself me alone wanted and needed t write them. i've conceded the fact there us no understanding of anything. at best, just winks of the eye an that is all i'm lookin for now i guess."

Dylan provoked a storm at the Newport Folk Music Festival of 1964 when he abandoned his protest songs in favor of love songs — and bitter, slightly warped though they may be, they are songs bout love. The editor of Sing Out!, the bnational folk song magazine, wrote a long impassioned open letter deploring the change. Fans rose to Dylan's defense. Country and Westerns singer Johnny Cash summed it up with the statement, "Shut up and let him sing." Then in the summer of 1965, again at the Newport Folk Festival, Dylan went onstage with a rock n' roll band using the hated electric amplified guitar, bass and piano. The audience booed.

Dylan was a bit surprised.

"You can't tell where the booing's going to come up. Can't tell at all," he said. **"It comes up in the weirdest, strangest places and they do it in blocks and when it comes it's quite a thing in itself. I mean they must be pretty rich to be able to go some place and boo. I couldn't afford it if I was in their shoes."**

The booing — which apparently has tapered off now — indicates a very real concern with what Dylan stands for. They *demand* things from him. But fans are beginning to realize that he is a poet and as such cannot be "owned."

But with the very same cynicism and skepticism that Dylan speaks to, some of his teen-age audience is asking today, "Has Dylan sold out?" He certainly has made a very great deal of money; he is perhaps a millionaire. The New York Times quotes Columbia Records as saying that. His records have been on top of the best-selling charts. His concerts fill halls everywhere. And money, in our society, marks the "sell-out."

But Allen Ginsberg, replying to a questioner about Dylan's having sold out, put his answer bluntly: "Dylan has sold out to God. That is to say, his command was to spread his beauty as wide as possible. It was an artistic challenge to see if great art can be done on a juke box. And he proved it can."

"I have more money," Dylan said recently. **"I just have a lot more money, is all."** And he doesn't care about the taxes. **"I have no remorse. I don't care. Uncle Sam, he's my UNCLE, he's a member of the family! Can't turn your back on a member of the family.**

"I don't know how much I make. I have no idea and I don't want to ever find out. You see a lot of people start out and they plan to be stars. Like they have to be stars. I mean I know a lot of those people. And they start out and they go into show business for many, many reasons. To be seen, y'know. I started out and this had nothing to do with it. I just happened. I haven't really struggled for that. It happened, you know? It happened like anything else happens. Just a happening. You don't try to figure out happenings. You dig happenings. I really have no idea. That is the truth. I always tell the truth. That is the truth."

But popularity has had a deep effect on his life just as it has had on any of the star figures in our culture. **"I can't write in the cafeteria, everybody wants the napkin,"** he complained, half kidding, to a friend. And then he arranged to meet the same friend at an all-night restaurant and sat in the window until the autograph seekers drove him out.

But whether Dylan admits any change, his program is different now. The rock n' roll band shows that; and he has abandoned some of the older songs. **"I wish I could write like 'Girl from the North Country'** (an older song) **but I can't write like that anymore. I dunno why."**

He doesn't think of his older songs as being any less valid, though. **"I just consider them something else to themselves, at another time, another dimension. It would be kind of dishonest of me to sing them now because I wouldn't really feel like singing them.**

"The difference in the songs I write now, in the last year and a half, maybe two… the songs before the fourth record, I used to know what I wanted to say before I used to write the song. See? All the stuff which I had written before, which wasn't song, was just on a piece of toilet paper. When it comes out like that, that's the kind of stuff I never would sing because people just would not be ready for it. I just went through that other thing of writing songs until I couldn't write like it anymore. It was just too easy and it wasn't really right. I would start out, I would know what I wanted to say before I wrote the song and I would say it and it would never come out exactly the way I thought it would. But it touched it.

"But now I just write a song like I *know* that it's just going to be all right and I don't really know exactly what it's all about, but I do know the minute and the layers of what it's all about.

" 'Rolling Stone' 's the best song I wrote. I wrote 'Rolling Stone' after England. I boiled it down, but it's all there. I had to quit after England. I had to stop and when I was writing it I knew I had to sing it with a band. I always sing when I write, even prose, and I heard it like that."

When he was told of high school students studying his lyrics, Dylan asked quickly if the lyrics were the old songs or the new ones. **"If it's the old ones, I feel a little guilty about it. They should use the new ones, like 'Desolation Row.' I know I'm not accepted but the professors in the universities and it used to bother me, but I know now I have nothin to live up to"** (an unconscious or conscious quote of one of his own lines in "It's All Right Ma").

The contrast between Dylan the person and Dylan the prophet of the Doomsday Poems is startling. Thin, almost emaciated, his lips clutching a cigarette, he talks quickly and nervously in a distinctive, edgy softness using a language of the urban hip street folk. His hands are cold and he seems shy and quick, like a young deer.

On stage, he is almost precisely the same as off. He dresses the same, though he may change boots or sometimes put on his suit of huge black and olive checks. **"I come on stage the same way I go anywhere. I mean are all these people paying to see me look neat?"**

"I want to sing you a song, recognizing that there are goliaths nowadays," he said as he prepared to sing "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll," that grim description of the wanton murder of a Negro maid. "This is a true story, only the words have been changed," he said once, introducing "The Ballad of Davey Moore," which condemns the brutality of boxing.

His wry sense of humor creeps up continually; sometimes he seems even to be putting himself on. "It's Halloween," he said at Carnegie Hall, "an I've got my Bob Dylan mask on."

There's a line in one of Dylan's songs, "Like a Rolling Stone," which is very revealing. He sings, "You're invisible now, you've got no secrets to conceal." And another time he said to a questioner, "Don't these people know I expose myself every time I go on stage?" In his poem, "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie," are the lines, "Just where am I goin?... just what am I doin on this road I'm walkin? On this trail I'm turning?... am I mixed up too much?... why am I walkin… why am I runnin?... what am I sayin? What am I knowin?... who am I helping?... what am I breakin? What am I giving? What am I talking?"

"The songs are what I do," he says. **"What I do is write the songs and sing them. And perform them. That's what I do. The performing part of it could end, but like I'm going to be writing these songs and singing them and I see no end, right now. That's what I do. Anything else interferes with it. Most of the time we feel like playing. That's important to me. The aftermath, whatever happens before and after is really not important to me. Just the time on the stage and the time we're signing the songs and performing them. Or really *not* performing them even, just letting them be there."**

Dylan's Doomsday Poems thunder against injustice and sing out in defense of "the confused, accused, misused, strung out ones and worse an… every hung up person in the whole in the whole wide universe." They include "Chimes of Freedom" as well as "It's All Right Ma," that bitter attack on the American Dream: "make everything from toy guns that spark to flesh-colored Christs that glow in the dark. It's easy to see without looking too far that not much is really sacred" and "even the President of the United States sometimes must have to stand naked."

"You have to vomit up everything you know. I did that, I vomited it all up and then went out and saw it all again," Dylan told a poet. The parallel to Rimbaud is striking, quite apart from the kinship of "Desolation Row" to "Season in Hell." Rimbaud not only was a child prodigy of poetry, but, like Dylan, ran away from home again and again. "The poet makers himself a seer," Rimbaud wrote, "by a long, prodigious and rational disordering of the senses. Every form of love, of suffering, of madness; he searches himself, he consumes all the poisons in him, and keeps only their quintessences. This is an unspeakable torture during which he needs all his faith and superhuman strength and during which he becomes the great patient, the great criminal, the great accursed — and the great learned one! — among men. For he arrives at the *unknown*! Because he has cultivated his own soul — which was rich to begin with — more than any other man! He reaches the unknown and even if, crazed, he ends up by losing the understanding of his visions, at least he has seen them! Let him die charging through those unutterable, unnamable things: other horrible workers will come; they will begin from the horizons where he has succumbed!" Then Rimbaud adds, "the poet really is the thief of fire" and "eternal art will have its function, since poets are citizens, Poetry will no longer rhyme with action: it will be ahead of it!"

Dylan puts it slightly differently. **"I am raginly against absolutely everything that wants t force nature t be unnatural,"** he says.

The New Youth is taking Dylan seriously. At a recent press conference, he noted **"something that amazed me. This 15-year-old girl, and she knew poets like William Blake and she knew his work and she was hip to all kinds of different things which people usually are not acquainted with at that age. So maybe it's just a new kind of person. A new kind of 15-year-old person. I don't know. I do know that that person is more free in the mind than 22-year-old college kids."**

The strength is there in the words and the songs. The ideas cleave to the minds of the young like moss to a tree trunk. And while he rejects the values of our world, of the Great Society and the New Frontier, he also speaks eloquently of a world in which the sacredness of the individual is paramount. It may not turn out that way, but the New Youth's "thief of fire" limns it out for you and, if poetry is ahead of action, it will come. This is how he says it:

i can't believe that i have
t hate anybody
an when i do
it will only be out of fear
an i'll know it

i know no answers an no truth
for absolutely no soul alive
i will listen to no one
who tells me morals
there are no morals
an i dream alot.

March 1966
Nat Hentoff (The Playboy) Interview, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 65-80.

This is the published "interview" and not the one you'll find on tape. The interview proper was conducted in Autumn 1965. It was an excellent and extensive interview lasting over two hours, but the resultant manuscript was mucked around with by the Playboy editor, much to Dylan's and Hentoff's annoyance, and was never published. To give you a feel of the extent of Dylan's displeasure I quote from Shelton -

> "I read the proofs and I said: 'Where in the fuck did you get these words?' Hentoff told me that the man from Playboy wrote in things to make it sound a little better... And they were downright fucking, silly-ass, you know, geech-like phrases. Peacock phrases. Just dumb bullshit, asinine things that... anybody that has ever met me and heard me talk knows I would not say."

How this "interview came" about is best described in Hentoff's own words:

> "There were two interviews. The first was almost an unusually straight interview. As I recall it was a quite sober, almost historical, biographical account, a lot of opinion, a certain amount of his – you know he can't avoid being sardonically funny, but just a straight interview. The galleys were sent to him and I don't recall him making more than two changes of no significance. Then the final set came to him after they messed with it in Chicago. I don't know what they did but I think they put some words in his mouth. They fooled around with it. I got a call and he was furious. I said, 'Look, tell them to go to hell. Tell them you don't want it to run.' And he said, 'No, I got a better idea. I'm gonna make one up.' I said it probably will work if they very much want to have a Dylan interview. We were on the phone and I did not have a tape recorder then. This was all by hand. I'll never forget, I could hardly move the damn thing for a day. He made up an interview. I helped I must say. Some of the good straight lines in there are mine, but all the really funny stuff... is his. It was run as was with absolutely no indication it was a put-on. I remember I saw him two or three times in the month or two after and he'd say, 'Hey, when's it coming out, when's it coming out?' because he thought it was a very funny caper, which it was.

And now the interview.

As a versatile musicologist and trenchant social commentator, Nat brings uniquely pertinent credentials to his task as interviewer of this month's controversial subject, about whom he writes:

Less than five years ago, Bob Dylan was scuffing in New York – sleeping in friends' apartments on the Lower East Side and getting very occasional singing work at Gerde's Folk City, an unprepossessing bar for citybillies in the Village. With his leather cap, blue jeans and battered desert boots – his unvarying costume in those days – Dylan looked like an updated, undernourished Huck Finn. And like Huck, he had come out of the Midwest; he would have said "escaped". The son of Abraham Zimmerman, an appliance dealer, he was raised in Hibbing, Minnesota, a bleak mining town near the Canadian border. Though he ran away from home regularly between the ages of ten and eighteen, young Zimmerman did manage to finish High School, and went on to spend about six months at the University of Minnesota in 1960.

By then, he called himself Bob Dylan – in tribute to Dylan Thomas, according to legend; but actually after a gambling uncle whose last name was similar to Dylan.

In the fall of that year, he came east to visit his idol, Woody Guthrie, in the New Jersey hospital where the Okie folk-singing bard was wasting away with a progressive disease of the nervous system. Dylan stayed and tried to scrape together a singing career. According to those who knew him then, he was shy and stubborn but basically friendly and, beneath the hipster stance, uncommonly gentle. But they argued about his voice. Some found it's flat Midwestern tones gratingly mesmeric; others agreed with a Missouri folk singer who had likened the Dylan sound to that of "a dog with his leg caught in barbed wire." All agreed, however, that his songs were strangely personal and often disturbing, a pungent mixture of loneliness and defiance laced with traces of Guthrie, echoes of the Negro blues singers and more than a suggestion of country-and-western; but essentially Dylan was developing his own penetratingly distinctive style. Yet the voice was so harsh and the songs so bitterly scornful of conformity, race prejudice and the mythology of the Cold War that most of his friends couldn't conceive of Dylan making it big even though folk music was already on the rise.

They were wrong. In September of 1961, a music critic for the New York Times caught his act at Gerde's and hailed the scruffy nineteen-year-old Minnesotan as a significant new voice on the folk horizon. Around the same time, he was signed by Columbia Records, and his first album was released early the next year. Though it was far from a smash hit, concerts and club engagements gradually multiplied; and then Dylan scored his storied triumph at the Newport Folk Festival in 1962. His next LP began to move, and in the spring of 1963 came his first big single: *Blowin' In The Wind*. That same spring he turned down a lucrative guest shot on the Ed Sullivan Show because CBS wouldn't permit him to sing a mordant parody he'd written about the John Birch Society. For the nation's young, the Dylan image began to form: kind of a singing James Dean with overtones of Holden Caulfield; he was making it, but he wasn't selling out. His concerts began to attract overflow crowds, and his songs – in performance by him and other folk singers – were rushing onto the hit charts. One of them, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, became an anthem for the rebellious young, who savored its message that adults don't know where it's at and can't tell their children what to do.

By 1965 he had become a major phenomenon on the music scene. More and more folk performers, from Joan Baez to the Byrds, considered it mandatory to have an ample supply of Dylan songs in their repertoires; in one frantically appreciative month – last August – forty-eight different recordings of Dylan ballads were pressed by singers other than the composer himself. More and more aspiring folk singers – and folk-song writers – have begun to sound like Dylan. The current surge of 'protest' songs by such long-haired, post-beat rock n' rollers as Barry McGuire and Sonny and Cher is credited to Dylan. And the newest commercial boom, 'folk-rock', a fusion of folk-like lyrics with an r'-n'-r' beat and background, is an outgrowth, in large part, of Dylan's recent decision – decried as a "sellout" by folknik purists – to perform with a rock n' roll combo rather than continue to accompany himself alone on the guitar. Backed by the big beat of the new group, Dylan tours England with as much tumultuous success as he does America, and the air play for his single records in both countries is rivaled only by that of the Beatles, Herman's Hermits and the Rolling Stones on the top forty deejay shows. In the next eighteen months, his income – from personal appearances, record and composer's royalties – is expected to exceed a million dollars.

Withal, Dylan seems outwardly much the same as he did during the lean years in Greenwich Village. His dress is still casual to the point of exoticism; his hair is still long and frizzy, and he is still no more likely to be seen wearing a necktie than a cutaway. But there have been changes. No longer protesting polemically against the bomb, race prejudice and conformity, his songs have become increasingly personal – a surrealistic amalgam of Kafkaesque menace,

corrosive satire and opaque sensuality. His lyrics are more crowded than ever with tumbling words and restless images, and they read more like free-verse poems than conventional lines. Adults still have difficulty digging his offbeat language – and its message of alienation – but the young continue to tune in and turn on.

But there are other changes. Dylan has become elusive. He is no longer seen in his old haunts in the Village and on the Lower East Side. With few exceptions, he avoids interviewers, and in public, he is usually seen from afar at the epicenter of a protective coterie of tousle-topped young men dressed like him. His home base, if it can be called that, is a house his manager owns near Woodstock, a fashionable artist's colony in New York State, and he also enjoys the run of his manager's apartment on dignified Gramercy Park in New York City. There are tales told of Dylan the motorcyclist, the novelist, the maker of high-camp home movies; but except among his small circle of intimates, the twenty-four-year-old folk hero is inscrutably aloof.

It was only after a long period of evasion and hesitation that Dylan finally agreed to grant this interview – the longest he's ever given. We met him on the tenth floor of the CBS and Columbia Records building in mid-Manhattan. The room was antiseptic; white walls with black trim, contemporary furniture with severe lines, avant-garde art chosen by committee, everything in order, neat desks, neat personnel. In this sterile setting, slouched in a chair across from us, Dylan struck a refreshingly discordant note – with his untamed brownish-blond mane brushing the collar of his tieless blue-plaid shirt, in his black jacket, gray vaudevillian-striped pipestem pants and well-worn blue suede shoes. Sitting nearby – also long-haired, tieless and black-jacketed, but wearing faded jeans – was a stringy young man whom the singer identified only as Taco Pronto. As Dylan spoke – in a soft drawl, smiling only rarely and fleetingly, sipping tea and chain-smoking cigarettes – his unspeaking friend chuckled and nodded appreciatively from the sidelines. Tense and guarded at first, Dylan gradually began to loosen up, then to open up, as he tried to tell us – albeit a bit surrealistically – just where he's been and where he's going. Under the circumstances, we chose to play straight man in our questions, believing that to have done otherwise would have stemmed the free-wheeling flow of Dylan's responses.

NH: **"Popular songs"**, you told a reporter last year, **"are the only art form that describes the temper of the times. The only place where it's happening is on the radio and records. That's where the people hang out. It's not in books; it's not on the stage; it's not in the galleries. All this art they've been talking about, it just remains on the shelf. It doesn't make anyone happier."** In view of the fact that more people than ever before are reading books and going to plays and art galleries, do you think that statement is borne out by the facts?

BD: Statistics measure quantity not quality. The people in the statistics are people who are very bored. Art, if there is such a thing, is in the bathrooms; everybody knows that. To go to an art gallery thing where you get free milk and doughnuts and where there is a rock n' roll band playing: that's just a status affair. I'm not putting it down, mind you: but I spend a lot of time in the bathroom. I think museums are vulgar. They're all against sex. Anyhow, I didn't say that people "hang out" on the radio, I said they get "hung up" on the radio.

NH: Why do you think rock n' roll has become such an international phenomenon?

BD: I can't really think that there is any rock n' roll. Actually, when you think about it, anything that has no real existence is bound to become an international phenomenon. Anyway, what does it mean – rock n' roll? Does it mean Beatles, does it mean John Lee Hooker, Bobby Vinton, Jerry Lewis' kid? What about Lawrence Welk? He must play a few rock n' roll songs. Are all these people the same? Is Ricky Nelson like Otis Redding? Is Mick Jagger really Ma Rainey? I can tell you the way people hold their cigarettes if they like Ricky Nelson. I think it's fine to like Ricky Nelson; I couldn't care less if somebody likes Ricky Nelson. But I think we're getting off the track here. There isn't

any Ricky Nelson. There isn't any Beatles; oh, I take that back; there are a lot of beetles. But there isn't any Bobby Vinton. Anyway, the word is not "international phenomenon"; the word is "parental nightmare".

NH: In recent years, according to some critics, jazz has lost much of its appeal to the younger generation. Do you agree?

BD: I don't think jazz has ever appealed to the younger generation. Anyway, I don't really know who this younger generation is. I don't think they could get into a jazz club anyway. But jazz is hard to follow; I mean you actually have to like jazz to follow it; and my motto is, never follow anything. I don't know what the motto of the younger generation is, but I would think they'd have to follow their parents. I mean, what would some parent say to his kid if the kid came home with a glass eye, a Charlie Mingus record and a pocketful of feathers? He'd say: "Who are you following?" And the poor kid would have to stand there with water in his shoes, a bow tie on his ear and soot pouring out of his belly button and say: "Jazz, Father, I've been following jazz." And his father would probably say: "Get a broom and clean up all that soot before you go to sleep." Then the kid's mother would tell her friends: "Oh yes, our little Donald, he's part of the younger generation, you know."

NH: You used to say that you wanted to perform as little as possible, that you wanted to keep most of your time to yourself. Yet you're doing more concerts and cutting more records every year. Why? Is it the money?

BD: Everything is changed now from before. Last spring I guess I was going to quit singing. I was very drained and the way things were going it was a very draggy situation – I mean, when you do *Everybody Loves You For Your Black Eye* and meanwhile the back of your head is caving in. Anyway, I was playing a lot of songs I didn't want to play. I was singing words I didn't really want to sing. I don't mean words like "God" and "mother" and "president" and "suicide" and "meat cleaver". I mean simple little words like "if" and "hope" and "you". But *Like A Rolling Stone* changed it all; I didn't care any more after that about writing books or poems or whatever. I mean it was something that I myself could dig. It's very tiring having other people tell you how much they dig you if you yourself don't dig you. It's also very deadly entertainment-wise. Contrary to what some scary people think, I don't play with a band now for any kind of propaganda-type or commercial-type reasons. It's just that my songs are pictures and the band makes the sound of the pictures.

NH: Do you feel that acquiring a combo and switching from folk to folk-rock has improved you as a performer?

BD: I'm not interested in myself as a performer. Performers are people who perform for other people. Unlike actors, I know what I'm saying. It's very simple in my mind. It doesn't matter what kind of audience reaction this whole thing gets. What happens on the stage is straight. It doesn't expect any rewards or fines from any kind of outside agitators. It's ultra-simple, and would exist whether anybody was looking or not. As far as folk and folk-rock are concerned, it doesn't matter what kind of nasty names people invent for the music. It could be called arsenic music, or perhaps Phaedra music. I don't think that such a word as folk-rock has anything to do with it. And folk music is a word I can't use. Folk music is a bunch of fat people. I have to think of all this as traditional music. Traditional music is based on hexagrams. It comes about from legends, bibles, plagues, and it revolves around vegetables and death. There's nobody that's going to kill traditional music. All these songs about roses growing out of peoples brains and lovers who are really geese and swans that turn into angels -they're not going to die. It's all those paranoid people who think that someone's going to come and take away their toilet paper – they're going to die. Songs like "Which Side Are You On?" and "I Love You, Porgy" – they're not folk music songs; They're already dead. Obviously, death is not very universally accepted. I mean, you'd think that the traditional-music people could gather from their songs that mystery is a fact, a traditional fact. I listen to the old

ballads. I could give you descriptive detail of what they do to me, but some people would probably think that my imagination had gone mad. It strikes me funny that people actually have the gall to think that I have some kind of fantastic imagination. It gets very lonesome. But anyway, traditional music is too unreal to die. It doesn't need to be protected. Nobody's going to hurt it. In that music is the only true, valid death you can feel today off a record player. But like anything else in great demand, people try to own it. It has to do with a purity thing. I think it's meaninglessness is holy. Everybody knows that I'm not a folk singer.

NH: Some of your old fans would agree with you – and not in a complimentary vein – since your debut with the rock n' roll combo at last years Newport Folk Festival, where many of them booed you loudly for "selling out" to commercial pop tastes. The early Bob Dylan, they felt, was the "pure" Bob Dylan. How do you feel about it?

BD: I was kind of stunned. But I can't put anybody down for coming and booing. After all, they paid to get in. They could have been maybe a little quieter and not so persistent though. There were a lot of old people there, too: lots of whole families had driven down from Vermont, lots of nurses and their parents, and well, like they just came to hear some relaxing hoedowns, you know, maybe an Indian polka or two. And just when everything's going all right, here I come on, and the whole place turns into a beer factory. There were a lot of people there who were very pleased that I got booed. I saw them afterward. I do resent somewhat, though, that everybody that booed said they did it because they were old fans.

NH: What about their charge that you vulgarized your natural gift?

BD: What can I say? I'd like to see one of those so-called fans. I'd like to have him blindfolded and brought to me. It's like going out into the desert and screaming, and then having little kids throw their sandbox at you. I'm only twenty-four. These people that said this – were they Americans?

NH: Americans or not, there were a lot of people who didn't like your new sound. In view of this widespread negative reaction, do you think you have made a mistake in changing your style?

BD: A mistake is to commit a misunderstanding. There could be no such thing, anyway, as this action. Either people understand or they pretend to understand – or else they really don't understand. What you're speaking of here is doing wrong things for selfish reasons. I don't know the word for that, unless it's suicide. In any case, it has nothing to do with my music.

NH: Mistake or not, what made you decide to go the rock n' roll route?

BD: Carelessness. I lost my one true love. I started drinking. The first thing I know, I'm in a card game. Then I'm in a crap game. I wake up in a pool hall. Then this big Mexican lady drags me off the table, takes me to Philadelphia. She leaves me alone in her house, and it burns down. I wind up in Phoenix, I get a job as a Chinaman. I start working in a dime store, and move in with a thirteen-year-old girl. Then this big Mexican lady from Philadelphia comes in and burns the house down. I go down to Dallas. I get a job as "before" in a Charles Atlas "before and after ad". I move in with a delivery boy who can cook fantastic chili and hot dogs. Then this thirteen-year old girl from Phoenix comes and burns the house down. The delivery boy – he ain't so mild: he gives her the knife, and the next thing I know, I'm in Omaha. It's so cold there, by this time I'm robbing my own bicycles and frying my own fish. I stumble onto some luck and get a job as a carburetor out at the hot-rod races every Thursday night. I move in with a high school teacher who also does a little plumbing on the side, who ain't much to look at, but who's built a special kind of refrigerator that can turn newspaper into lettuce. Everything's going good until that delivery boy shows up and tries to knife me. Needless to say, he burned the house down, and hit the road. The first guy that picked me up asked me if I wanted to be a star. What could I say?

NH: And that's how you became a rock n' roll singer?

BD: No, that's how I got tuberculosis.

NH: Let's turn the question around: why have you stopped composing and singing protest songs?

BD: I've stopped composing and singing anything that has either a reason to be written or a motive to be sung. Don't get me wrong, now. "Protest" is not my word. I've never thought of myself as such. The word "protest", I think, was made up for people undergoing surgery. It's an amusement-park word. A normal person in his righteous mind would have to have the hiccups to pronounce it honestly. The word "message" strikes me as having a hernia-like sound. It's just like the word "delicious". Also the word "marvelous". You know, the English can say "marvelous" pretty good. They can't say "raunchy" so good, though. Well, we each have our thing. Anyway, message songs, as everybody knows, are a drag, it's only college newspaper editors and single girls under fourteen that could possibly have time for them.

NH: You've said you think message songs are vulgar. Why?

BD: Well, first of all, anybody that's got a message is going to learn from experience that they can't put it into a song. I mean it's just not going to come out the same message. After one or two of these unsuccessful attempts, one realizes that his resultant message, which is not even the same message he thought up and began with, he's now got to stick to it. Because, after all, a song leaves your mouth just as soon as it leaves your hands. Are you following me?

NH: Oh, perfectly.

BD: Well, anyway, second of all, you've got to respect other peoples right to also have a message themselves. Myself, what I'm going to do is rent town hall and put about thirty Western Union boys on the bill. I mean, then there'll really be some messages. People will be able to come and hear more messages than they've ever heard before in their life.

NH: But your early ballads have been called "songs of passionate protest." Wouldn't that make them "message" music?

BD: This is unimportant. Don't you understand? I've been writing since I was eight years old. I've been playing the guitar since I was ten. I was raised playing and writing whatever it was I had to play and write.

NH: Would it be unfair to say, then, as some have, that you were motivated commercially rather than creatively in writing the kind of songs that made you popular?

BD: All right, now, look. It's not all that deep. It's not a complicated thing. My motives, or whatever they are, were never commercial in the money sense of the word. It was more in the don't-die-by-the-hacksaw sense of the word. I never did it for money. It happened, and I let it happen to me. There was no reason not to let it happen to me. I couldn't have written before what I write now, anyway. The songs used to be about what I felt and saw. Nothing of my own rhythmic vomit ever entered into it. Vomit is not romantic. I used to think songs are supposed to be romantic. And I didn't want to sing anything that was unspecific. Unspecific things have no sense of time. All of us people have no sense of time; it's a dimensional hang-up. Anybody can be specific and obvious. That's always been the easy way. The leaders of the world take the easy way. It's not that it's so difficult to be unspecific and less obvious; it's just that there's nothing, absolutely nothing, to be specific and obvious about. My older songs, to say the least, were about nothing. The newer ones are about the same nothing – only as seen inside a bigger thing, perhaps called the nowhere. But this is all very constipated. I do know what my songs are about.

NH: And what's that?

BD: Oh, some are about four minutes, some are about five and some, believe it or not, are about eleven or twelve.

NH: Can't you be a bit more informative?

BD: Nope.

NH: All right. Let's change the subject. As you know, it's the age group from about sixteen to twenty-three that listens to your songs. Why, in your opinion.

BD: I don't see what's so strange about an age group like that listening to my songs. I'm hip enough to know that it ain't going to be the eighty-five to ninety-year-olds were listening to me, they'd know that I can't tell them anything. The sixteen to twenty-five year olds, they probably know that I can't tell them anything either – and they know that I know it. It's a funny business. Obviously, I'm not an IBM computer anymore than I'm an ashtray. I mean it's obvious to anyone who's ever slept in the back seat of a car that I'm just not a schoolteacher.

NH: Even though you're not a schoolteacher, wouldn't you like to help the young people who dig you from turning into what some of their parents have become?

BD: Well, I must say that I don't really know their parents. I really don't know if anybody's parents are so bad. Now, I hate to come on like a weakling or a coward, and I realize it might seem kind of irreligious, But I'm really not the right person to tramp around the country saving souls. I wouldn't run over anybody that was lying in the street, and I certainly wouldn't become a hangman. I wouldn't think twice about giving a starving man a cigarette. But I'm not a shepherd. And I'm not about to save anybody from fate, which I know nothing about. "Parents" is not the key word here. The key word is "destiny". I can't save them from that.

NH: Still, thousands of young people look up to you as a kind of folk hero. Do you feel some sense of responsibility towards them?

BD: I don't feel I have any responsibility, no. Whoever it is that listens to my songs owes me nothing. How could I possibly have any responsibility to any kinds of thousands? What could possibly make me think that I owe anybody anything who just happens to be there? I've never written any song that begins with the words "I've gathered you here tonight..." I'm not about to tell anybody to be a good boy or a good girl and they'll go to heaven. I really don't know what the people who are on the receiving end of these songs think of me, anyway. It's horrible. I'll bet Tony Bennett doesn't have to go through this kind of thing. I wonder what Billy the Kid would have answered to such a question?

NH: In their admiration for you, many young people have begun to imitate the way you dress -which one adult commentator has called "self-consciously oddball and defiantly sloppy". What's you reaction to that kind of putdown?

BD: Bullshit. Oh, such bullshit. I know the fellow that said that. He used to come around here and get beat up all the time. He better watch it; some people are after him. They're going to strip him naked and stick him in Times Square. They're going to tie him up, and also put a thermometer in his mouth. Those kind of morbid ideas and remarks are so petty – I mean there's a war going on. People got rickets; everybody wants to start a riot; forty-year-old women are eating spinach by the carload; the doctors haven't got a cure for cancer – and here's one hillbilly talking about how he doesn't like somebody's clothes. Worse than that, it gets printed and innocent people have to read it. This is a terrible thing. And he's a terrible man. Obviously, he's just living off the fat of himself, and he's expecting his kids to take care of him. His kids probably listen to my records. Just because my clothes are too long, does that mean I'm unqualified for what I do?

NH: No, but there are those who think it does – and many of them seem to feel the same way about your long hair. But compared with the shoulder-length coiffures worn by some of the male singing groups these days, your tonsorial tastes are on the conservative side. How do you feel about these far-out hair styles?

BD: The thing that most people don't realize is that it's warmer to have long hair. Everybody wants to be warm, People with short hair freeze easily. Then they try to hide their coldness, and they get jealous of everybody that's warm. Then they become either barbers or congressmen. A lot of prison warders have short hair. Have you ever noticed that Abraham Lincoln's hair was much longer than John Wilkes Booth's?

NH: Do you think Lincoln wore his hair long to keep his head warm?

BD: Actually, I think it was for medical reasons, which are none of my business. But I guess if you figure it out, you realize that all of ones hair surrounds and lays on the brain inside your head. Mathematically speaking, the more of it you can get out of your head, the better. People who want free minds sometimes overlook the fact that you have to have an uncluttered brain. Obviously, if you get your hair on the outside of the head, your brain will be a little more freer. But all this talk about long hair is just a trick. It's been thought up by men and women who look like cigars – the antihappiness committee. They're all freeloaders and cops. You can tell who they are: they're always carrying calendars, guns or scissors. They're all trying to get into your quicksand. They think you've got something. I don't know why Abe Lincoln has long hair.

NH: Until your abandonment of "message songs", you were considered not only a major voice in the student protest movement but a militant champion of the civil rights struggle. According to friends, you seemed to feel a special bond of kinship with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, which you actively supported both as a performer and a worker. Why have you withdrawn from participation in all these causes? Have you lost interest in protest as well as in protest songs?

BD: As far as SNCC is concerned, I knew some of the people in it, but I only knew them as people, not as any part of something that was bigger than themselves. I didn't even know what civil rights was before I met some of them. I mean, I knew there were Negroes, and I knew there were a lot of people who don't like Negroes. But I got to admit that if I didn't know some of the SNCC people, I would have gone on thinking that Martin Luther King was really nothing more than some under-privileged war hero. I haven't lost any interest in protest since then. I just didn't have any interest in protest to begin with – any more than I did in war heroes. You can't lose what you've never had. Anyway, when you don't like your situation, you either leave it or else you overthrow it. You can't just stand around and whine about it. People just get aware of your noise; they really don't get aware of you. Even if they give you what you want, it's only because you're making too much noise. First thing you know, you want something else, and then you want something else, and then you want something else, until finally it isn't a joke anymore, and whoever you're protesting against finally gets all fed up and stomps on everybody. Sure, you can go around trying to bring up people who are lesser than you, but then don't forget, you're messing around with gravity. I don't fight gravity. I do believe in equality, but I also believe in distance.

NH: Do you mean people keeping their racial distance?

BD: I believe in people keeping everything they've got.

NH: Some people might feel that you're trying to cop out of fighting for the things you believe in.

BD: Those would be people who think I have some sort of responsibility towards them. They probably want me to help them make friends. I don't know. They probably either want to set me in their house and have me come out every hour and tell them what time it is, or else they just want to stick me in between the mattress. How could they possibly understand what I believe in?

NH: Well, what do you believe in?

BD: I already told you.

NH: All right. Many of your folk-singing colleagues remain actively involved in the fight for civil rights, free speech and withdrawal from Vietnam. Do you think they're wrong?

BD: I don't think they're wrong, if that's what they see themselves doing. But don't think that what you've got out there is a bunch of little Buddhas all parading up and down. People that use God as a weapon should be amputated upon. You see it around here all the time: "Be good or God won't like you, and you'll go to hell." Things like that. People that march with slogans and things tend to take themselves a little too holy. It would drag if they, too, started using God as a weapon.

NH: Do you think it's pointless to dedicate yourself to the cause of peace and racial equality?

BD: Not pointless to dedicate yourself to peace and racial equality, but rather, it's pointless to dedicate yourself to the cause; that's really pointless. That's very unknowing. To say "cause of peace" is just like saying "hunk of butter". I mean how can you listen to anybody who wants you to believe he's dedicated to the hunk and not to the butter? People who can't conceive of how others hurt, they're trying to change the world. They're all afraid to admit that they don't really know each other. They'll all probably be here long after we've gone, and we'll give birth to new ones. But they themselves – I don't think they'll give birth to anything.

NH: You sound a bit fatalistic.

BD: I'm not fatalistic. Bank tellers are fatalistic. Clerks are fatalistic. I'm a farmer. Who ever heard of a fatalistic farmer? I'm not fatalistic. I smoke a lot of cigarettes, but that doesn't make me fatalistic.

NH: You were quoted recently as saying that "songs can't save the world. I've gone through all that." We take it you don't share Pete Seeger's belief that songs can change people, that they can help build international understanding.

BD: On the international understanding part, that's OK. But you have a translation problem there. Anybody with this kind of a level of thinking has to also think about this translation thing. But I don't believe songs can change people anyway. I'm not Pinocchio. I consider that an insult. I'm not part of that. I don't blame anybody for thinking that way. But I just don't donate any money to them. I don't consider them anything like unhip; they're more in the rubber-band category.

NH: How do you feel about those who have risked imprisonment by burning their draft cards to signify their opposition to US involvement in Vietnam and by refusing – as your friend Joan Baez has done – to pay their income taxes as a protest against the Government's expenditure on war and weaponry? Do you think they're wasting their time?

BD: Burning draft cards isn't going to end any war. It's not even going to save any lives. If someone can feel more honest with himself by burning his draft card, then that's great. But if he's just going to feel more important because he does it, then that's a drag. I really don't know too much about Joan Baez and her income tax problems. The only thing I can tell you about Joan Baez is that she's not Belle-Starr.

NH: Writing about "beard-wearing draft card burners and pacifist income tax evaders", one columnist called such protesters "no less outside society than the junkie, the homosexual or the mass murderer." What's your reaction?

BD: I don't believe in those terms. They're too hysterical. They don't describe anything. Most people think that homosexual, gay, queer, queen, faggot are all the same words. Everybody thinks that a junkie is a dope freak. As far as I'm concerned, I don't consider myself outside of anything. I just consider myself not around.

NH: Joan Baez recently opened a school in northern California for training civil rights workers in the philosophy and techniques of non-violence. Are you in sympathy with that concept?

BD: If you mean do I agree with it or not, I really don't see anything to be in agreement with. If you mean has it got my approval, I guess it does, but my approval really isn't going to do it any good. I don't know about other people's sympathy, but my sympathy runs to the lame and crippled and beautiful things. I have a feeling of loss of power - something like a reincarnation feeling. I don't feel that for mechanical things like cars or schools. I'm sure it's a nice school, but if you're asking me would I go to it, I would have to say no.

NH: As a college dropout in your freshman year, you seem to take a dim view of schooling in general, whatever the subject.

BD: I really don't think about it.

NH: Well, have you ever had any regrets about not completing college?

BD: That would be ridiculous. Colleges are like old-age homes; except for the fact that more people die in college than in old-age homes, there's really no difference. People have one great blessing – obscurity – and not really too many people are thankful for it. Everybody is always taught to be thankful for their food and clothes and things like that, but not to be thankful for their obscurity. Schools don't teach that. They teach people to be rebels and lawyers. I'm not going to put down the teaching system; that would be too silly. It's just that it really doesn't have too much to teach. Colleges are part of the American institution. Everybody respects them. They're very rich and influential, but they have nothing to do with survival. Everybody knows that.

NH: Would you advise young people to skip college, then?

BD: I wouldn't advise anybody to do anything. I certainly wouldn't advise somebody not to go to college. I just wouldn't pay his way through college.

NH: Don't you think the things one learns in college can help enrich ones life?

BD: I don't think anything like that is going to enrich my life, no – not my life, anyway. Things are going to happen whether I know why they happen or not. It just gets more complicated when you stick yourself into it. You don't find out why things move. You let them move; you watch them move; you stop them from moving; you start them moving. But you don't sit around and try to figure out why there's movement – unless, of course, you're just an innocent moron, or some wise old Japanese man. Out of all the people who just lay around and ask why? how many do you figure really want to know?

NH: Can you suggest a better use for the four years that would otherwise be spent in college?

BD: Well, you could hang around in Italy. You could go to Mexico. You could become a dishwasher. You could even go to Arkansas. I don't know, there are thousands of things to do and places to go. Everybody thinks that you have to bang your head against the wall, but it's silly when you really think about it. I mean, here you have fantastic scientists working on ways to prolong human living, and then you have other people who take it for granted that you have to beat your head against the wall in order to be happy. You can't take everything you don't like as a personal insult. I guess you should go where your wants are bare, where you're invisible and not needed.

NH: Would you classify sex among your wants, wherever you go?

BD: Sex is a temporary thing. Sex isn't love. You can get sex anywhere. If you're looking for someone to love you, now that's different. I guess you have to stay in college for that.

NH: Since you didn't stay in college, does that mean you haven't found someone to love you?

BD: Let's go on to the next question.

NH: Do you have any difficulty relating to people – or vice versa?

BD: Well, sometimes I have the feeling that other people want my soul. If I say to them "I don't have a soul" they say "I know that. You don't have to tell me that. Not me. How dumb do you think I am? I'm your friend." What can I say except maybe feeling bad and paranoia are the same thing.

NH: Paranoia is said to be one of the mental states sometimes induced by such hallucinogenic drugs as peyote and LSD. Considering the risks involved, do you think that experimentation with such drugs should be part of the growing-up experience for a young person?

BD: I wouldn't advise anybody to use drugs – certainly not the hard drugs. Drugs are medicine. But opium and hash and pot – now, those things aren't drugs. They just bend your mind a little. I think everybody's mind should be bent once in a while. Not by LSD, though. LSD is a medicine – a different kind of medicine. It makes you aware of the universe so to speak. You realize how foolish objects are. But LSD is not for groovy people. It's for mad, hateful people who want revenge. It's for people who usually have heart attacks. They ought to use it at the Geneva convention.

NH: Are you concerned, as you approach thirty, that you may begin to "go square", lose some of your openness to experience, become leery of change and new experiment?

BD: No. But if it happens, then it happens. What can I say? There doesn't seem to be any tomorrow. Every time I wake up, no matter in what position, it's always been today. To look ahead and start worrying about trivial little things I can't really say has any more importance than looking back and remembering trivial little things. I'm not going to become any poetry instructor at any girls' school; I know that for sure. But that's about all I know for sure. I'll just keep doing these different things, I guess.

NH: Such as?

BD: Waking up in different positions.

NH: What else?

BD: I'm just like anybody else. I'll try anything once.

NH: Including theft and murder?

BD: I can't really say I wouldn't commit theft or murder and expect anybody to really believe me. I wouldn't believe anybody if they told me that.

NH: By their mid-twenties, most people have begun to settle into their niche, to find a place in society. But you've managed to remain inner-directed and uncommitted. What was it that spurred you to run away from home six times between the ages of ten and eighteen and finally to leave for good?

BD: It was nothing. It was just an accident of geography. Like if I was born and raised in New York or Kansas City, I'm sure everything would have turned out different. But Hibbing, Minnesota, was just not the right place for me to stay and live. There really was nothing there. The only thing you could do there was to be a miner, and even that kind of thing was getting less and less. The people that lived there – they're nice people. I've been all over the world since I left there, and they still stand out as being the least hung-up. The mines were just dying, that's all; but that's not their fault. Everybody about my age left there. It was no great romantic thing. It didn't take any great amount of thinking or individual genius, and there certainly wasn't any pride in it. I didn't run away from it; I just turned my back on it. It couldn't give me anything. It was very void-like. So leaving wasn't hard at all. It would have been much harder to stay. I didn't want to die there. As I think about it now, though, it wouldn't be such a bad place to go back to and die in. There's no place I feel closer to now, or get the feeling that I'm part of, except maybe New York City. But I'm not a New Yorker. I'm North Dakota-Minnesota-Midwestern. I'm that color. I speak that way. I'm from someplace called Iron Range. My brains and feelings have come from there. I wouldn't amputate on a drowning man. Nobody from out there would.

NH: Today you're on your way to becoming a millionaire. Do you feel in any danger of being trapped by all this affluence – by the things it can buy?

BD: No, my world is very small. Money can't really improve it any. Money can just keep it from being smothered.

NH: Most big stars find it difficult to avoid getting involved, and sometimes entangled, in managing the business end of their careers. As a man with three thriving careers – as a concert performer, recording star and songwriter – do you ever feel boxed in by such non-creative responsibilities?

BD: No, I've got other people to do that for me. They watch my money. They guard it. They keep their eyes on it at all times. They're supposed to be very smart when it comes to money. They know just what to do with my money. I pay them a lot of it. I don't really speak to them much, and they don't really speak to me at all, so I guess everything is all right.

NH: If fortune hasn't trapped you, how about fame? Do you find that your celebrity makes it difficult to keep your private life intact?

BD: My private life has been dangerous from the beginning. All this does is add a little atmosphere.

NH: You used to enjoy wandering across the country – taking off on open-end trips, roughing it from town to town, with no particular destination in mind. But you seem to be doing much less of that these days. Why? Is it because you're too well known?

BD: It's mainly because I have to be in Cincinnati Friday night, and the next night I got to be in Atlanta, and then the next night after that, I have to be in Buffalo. Then I have to write some more songs for a record album.

NH: Do you get the chance to ride your motorcycle much anymore?

BD: I'm still very patriotic to the highway, but I don't ride my motorcycle too much anymore, no.

NH: How do you get your kicks these days, then?

BD: I hire people to look into my eyes, and then I have them kick me.

NH: And that's the way you get your kicks?

BD: No. Then I forgive them. That's where my kicks come in.

NH: You told an interviewer last year: **"I've done everything I ever wanted to."** If that's true, what do you have to look forward to?

BD: Salvation. Just plain salvation.

NH: Anything else?

BD: Praying. I'd also like to start a cookbook magazine. And I've always wanted to be a boxing referee. I want to referee a heavy-weight championship fight. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine any fighter in his right mind recognizing me?

NH: If your popularity were to wane, would you welcome being anonymous again?

BD: You mean welcome it, like I'd welcome some poor pilgrim coming in from the rain? No, I wouldn't welcome it. I'd accept it, though. Someday, obviously, I'm going to have to accept it.

NH: Do you ever think about marrying, settling down, having a home, maybe living abroad? Are there any luxuries you'd like to have, say, a yacht or a Rolls-Royce?

BD: No, I don't think about those things. If I felt like buying anything, I'd buy it. What you're asking me about is the future, my future. I'm the last person in the world to ask about my future.

NH: Are you saying you're going to be passive and just let things happen to you?

BD: Well, that's being very philosophical about it, but I guess it's true.

NH: You once planned to write a novel. Do you still?

BD: I don't think so. All my writing goes into the songs now. Other forms don't interest me anymore.

NH: Do you have any unfulfilled ambitions?

BD: Well, I guess I've always wanted to be Anthony Quinn in *La Strada*. Not always – only for about six years now. It's not one of those childhood-dream things. Oh, and come to think of it, I guess I've always wanted to be Brigitte Bardot, too; but I don't really want to think about that too much.

NH: Did you ever have the standard boyhood dream of growing up to be president?

BD: No. When I was a boy, Harry Truman was president. Who'd want to be Harry Truman?

NH: Well, let's suppose that you were the president. What would you accomplish during your first thousand days?

BD: Well, just for laughs, so long as you insist, the first thing I'd do is probably move the White House. Instead of being in Texas, it'd be on the East Side in New York. McGeorge Bundy would definitely have to change his name, and General McNamara would be forced to wear a coonskin cap and shades. I would immediately rewrite The Star-Spangled Banner, and little school children, instead of memorizing America the Beautiful, would have to memorize Desolation Row (one of Dylan's latest songs). And I would immediately call for a showdown with Mao Tse Tung. I would fight him personally – and I'd get somebody to film it.

NH: One final question. Even though you've more or less retired from political and social protest, can you conceive of any circumstance that might persuade you to reinvolve yourself?

BD: No, not unless all the people in the world disappeared.

March 1966
Jules Siegel Interview, Hollywood Hills, Los Angeles, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 809-819.

Whilst staying in Hollywood Hills, Los Angeles, sometime during mid to late March 1966, Dylan had his first meeting with Jules Siegel who was writing a profile on him for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Siegel accompanied Dylan on the last couple of American concerts in March when he interviewed him further. The profile / interview was eventually published in the *Saturday Evening Post* on July 30, 1966, the day before Dylan's motorcycle crash.

"Well, What Have We Here!"

We have Bob Dylan, singer, songwriter, poet, who at 25 admits he's a millionaire but denies being a genius.

Quick and little, Bob Dylan scrambled from the safety of a rented gray sedan and ran for his dressing room through a wildness of teen-age girls who howled and grabbed for his flesh. A cordon of guards held for a moment against the overwhelming attack. Then it broke and Dylan disappeared beneath yards of bell-bottoms and long hair. After a brief struggle he was rescued by one of his assistants, who methodically tore small and large girls off him, but it was too late. With a pair of enormous shears, a giant blond girl had snipped a lock of the precious Dylan hair and now was weeping for joy.

"Did you see that?" said Dylan in his dressing room, his pale face somewhat paler than usual. **"I mean did you see that?"** repeated Dylan, who tends to talk in italics. **"I don't care about the hair, but she could have killed me. I mean she could have taken my eyes out with those scissors."**

This is Bob Dylan's year to be mobbed. Next year it will probably be somebody else. But this year Bob Dylan is the king of rock n' roll, and he is the least likely king popular music has ever seen. With a bony, nervous face covered with skin the color of sour milk, a fright-wig of curly brown hair teased into a bramble of stand-up tangles, and dark-circled hazel eyes usually hidden by large prescription sunglasses, Dylan is less like Elvis or Frankie than like some crippled saint or resurrected Beethoven.

The songs he writes and sings, unlike the usual young-love pap of the airwaves, are full of dark and, many insist, important meaning; they are peopled with freaks, clowns, tramps, artists and mad scientists, dancing and tumbling in progressions of visionary images mobilized to the massive beat of rock n' roll. They often make very little logical sense, but almost always they make very good poetic sense. According to a recent poll, college students call him the most important contemporary poet in America.

He is certainly the only poet who gets his hair snipped off by shrieking teen-age girls, but Dylan has always been a defier of categories. His first fame was as a folk singer and folk-song writer. Last year he modified his style to what has been labeled "folk-rock," a blend of serious, poetic lyrics and rock n' roll music, which has brought him his greatest commercial success but has alienated some purists who were his early fans. He is a singer whose voice has been compared to the howl of "a dog caught in barbed wire"; a performer whose stage presence includes no hip wiggling or even, until recently, any acknowledgement of his audience; a public figure whose press conferences are exercises in a new kind of surrealism in which reporters ask, "Are

you planning to do a movie?" and Dylan answers, deadpan, **"Yes, I'm going to play my mother."**

Yet, Bob Dylan, at the age of 25, has a million dollars in the bank and earns an estimated several hundred thousand dollars a year from concerts, recordings and publishing royalties. He is even more popular in England and Europe than in America. Four hours after tickets went on sale for his recent London concerts at Albert Hall, the SOLD-OUT sign was put up, and at one time five of his LP albums were selling in the top 20 in London. One paperback book on him has already been published; a hard-cover book about him by Robert Shelton, folk critic of *The New York Times*, will be published this winter; a third book of photographs and text by Daniel Kramer is scheduled for winter publication. A two-hour documentary of his English tours will soon be released for theater showing; he is about to begin production of his own movie; ABC-TV has signed him for a television special. A book of his writings, *Tarantula*, is to be published by Macmillan late this summer, with a prepublication excerpt to appear in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

And although he is not nearly so popular as the Beatles, who have sold nearly 200 million records in four years, his artistic reputation is so great that in the recording business Dylan is ranked as the No. 1 innovator, the most important trend-setter, one of the few people around who can change radically the course of teen music.

"Dylan," says a folk-singer friend of his, "is the king. He's the one we all look to for approval, the one we're all eating our hearts out about, the one who proved you could make it with the kids without any compromises. If I didn't admire him so much, I would have to hate him. In fact, maybe I do hate him anyway."

Born Robert Zimmerman, May 24, 1941, in Duluth, Minn., Dylan is a product of Hibbing, Minn., an iron-ore mining town of 18,000 inhabitants about 70 miles from the Canadian border. The southwestern accent in his singing voice is apparently acquired; he speaks without it. His father is a prosperous, witty, small (five-foot-six), cigar-smoking appliance dealer. His mother, a deeply tanned, attractive woman, is described by acquaintances as extremely intelligent, well informed and very talkative.

Dylan has a brother, David, 20, who attends St. Olaf College on a musical scholarship, and in the family it was always David who was thought of as "the musical one." Abe Zimmerman remembers buying a piano ("Not an expensive one," he says) when Bob was 10. Bob took one lesson and gave up in disgust because he couldn't play anything right away. David, then five, began taking lessons and has been playing ever since.

Despite his initial impatience, Bob Zimmerman soon taught himself how to play the piano, harmonica, guitar and autoharp. Once he began to play the piano, says Mrs. Zimmerman, he beat the keys out of tune pounding out rock n' roll. He also wrote – not only music but also poetry. **"My mother has hundreds of poems I wrote when I was twelve years old,"** says Dylan.

As an adolescent, Dylan helped his father in the store, delivering appliances and sometimes attempting to make collections. "He was strong," Abe Zimmerman recently told an acquaintance. "I mean he could hold up his end of a refrigerator as well as kids twice his size, football players."

"I used to make him go out to the poor sections," Mr. Zimmerman said, "knowing he couldn't collect any money from those people. I just wanted to show him another side of life. He'd come back and say, 'Dad, those people haven't got any money.' And I'd say, 'Some of those

people out there make as much money as I do, Bobby. They just don't know how to manage it.'"

In more than one way the lesson was well taken. Dylan today, while professing not to know anything about his wealth, appears to be a very good manager of money, careful sometimes to what might be considered stinginess.

A photographer friend of his recalls having to meet him at a hotel. "I called him," he says, "and asked if he wanted me to bring anything up for him". 'A container of tea', Bobby said. I said, 'Bobby, they have room service in the hotel; you can have it sent up.' He thought about that for a couple of seconds and then said no, room service was too expensive." This was in 1965 – the year that Dylan became a millionaire.

But Dylan learned more than frugality in the depressed areas of Hibbing. He learned, as Abe Zimmerman hoped he would, that there were people who knew nothing about middle-class life and middle-class values, people whose American dream had become a nightmare of installment debt. He seems to have felt a blood tie with them, based on a terrifying sense of his own peculiarity.

"I see things that other people don't see," he says. **"I feel things other people don't feel. It's terrible. They laugh. I felt like that my whole life."**

"My friends have been the same as me, people who couldn't make it as the high-school football halfback, Junior Chamber of Commerce leader, fraternity leader, truck driver working their way through college. I just had to be with them. I just don't care what anyone looks like, just as long as they didn't think I was strange. I couldn't do any of those things either. All I did was write and sing, paint little pictures on paper, dissolve myself into situations where I was invisible."

In pursuit of invisibility, Bob Zimmerman took to running away from home. **"I made my own depression,"** he says. **"Rode freight trains for kicks, got beat up for laughs, cut grass for quarters, met a waitress who picked me up and dropped me off in Washington."** He tells of living with carnivals, of some trouble with police in Hibbing, of entertaining in a strip joint.

Be that as it may, he managed to finish high school at the appropriate time and even earned a scholarship to the University of Minnesota. Then the middle-class college boy from Hibbing began to remake his life and his image radically. He moved from his fraternity house to a downtown apartment. He began singing and playing the guitar and harmonica at Minneapolis' Ten o'Clock Scholar for two dollars a night; it is said that when he asked for a raise to five dollars, he was fired. He became Bob Dylan, and has since changed his name legally. This was not in tribute to Dylan Thomas, as the widely circulated legend maintains, but for some reason which he doesn't feel compelled to explain seriously.

"Get that straight," he says. **"I didn't change my name in honor of Dylan Thomas. That's just a story. I've done more for Dylan Thomas than he's ever done for me. Look how many kids are probably reading his poetry now because they heard that story."**

Dylan also gave up his very conventional college-boy dress – for his first professional appearance in Minneapolis he had worn white buck shoes – and began to develop his own personal style. At first, he was influenced by the uniform of folk singers everywhere -jeans, work shirt, boots, collar-length hair. Now that he's a rock n' roll star, the uniform has changed. The boots are still part of it, but the jeans are now tight slacks that make his legs look skinnier than they are. The work shirt has been replaced by floppy polka-dot Carnaby Street English

shirts with oversized collars and long, puffed sleeves. Sometimes he wears racetrack-plaid suits in combinations of colors like green and black. His hair seems to get longer and wilder by the month.

In December, 1960, Dylan gave up on Minnesota and took off for New York to try rock n' roll, then in an uncertain state and dominated by clean-cut singers like Fabian and Frankie Avalon. It was not an auspicious time for someone who looked and sounded like Bob Dylan.

"I tried to make it in rock n' roll when rock n' roll was a piece of cream," he says. **"Elvis had struck; Buddy Holly was dead; Little Richard was becoming a preacher, and Gene Vincent was leaving the country. I wrote the kind of stuff you write when you have no place to live and you're wrapped up in the fire pump. I nearly killed myself with pity, and agony. I saw the way doors close; the way doors that do not like you close. A door that does not like you needs no one to close it. I had to retreat."**

Retreat for Dylan was folk music and Greenwich Village. He was strong medicine for both - nervous, cocky, different from anyone else around.

Arthur Kretchmer, a young magazine editor, remembers meeting Dylan at a party: "There was this crazy, restless little kid sitting on the floor and coming on very strong about how he was going to play Holden Caulfield in a movie of *Catcher in the Rye*, and I thought, 'This kid is really terrible'; but the people whose party it was said, 'Don't let him put you off. He comes on a little strong, but he's very sensitive – writes poetry, goes to visit Woody Guthrie in the hospital,' and I figured right, another one. I forgot all about him until a couple of years later he was famous and I wasn't. You can't always be right about these things, I suppose." Both Kretchmer and his wife are now Dylan fans.

Says Robert Shelton, whose book about Dylan is to be published this winter, "He was so astonishing-looking, so Chaplinesque and cherubic, sitting up on a stool playing the guitar and the harmonica and playing with the audience, making all kinds of wry faces, wearing this Huck Finn hat, that I laughed out loud with pleasure. I called over Pat Clancy [an Irish folk singer, one of the Clancy Brothers] and he looked at this cherub and broke into a broad smile and said, 'Well, what have we here?'"

Not too long after that, Shelton wrote a laudatory review in the *Times* of a Dylan performance. About the same time, Columbia Records executive John Hammond met Dylan at the home of folk singer Carolyn Hester, whom Dylan was going to accompany on a new record Hammond was producing. Without hearing him perform, Hammond offered Dylan a two-year contract with Columbia, and immediately hit a snag.

Dylan, a minor of 20, refused to admit to having any living relatives who could sign for him. **"I don't know where my folks are,"** he told Hammond. **"I think I've got an uncle who's a gambler in Nevada, but I wouldn't know how to track him down."** Taking another chance, Hammond finally let the boy execute the contract himself.

The young folk singer's first LP was called *Bob Dylan*. It cost $403 to produce and sold, initially, 4,200 copies. By way of comparison, Dylan's most recent record as of this writing, *Highway 61 Revisited*, has sold 360,000 in the United States. All together, it is estimated that 10 million Dylan records have been sold throughout the world. His songs have been recorded in more than 150 other versions by performers ranging from Stan Getz to Lawrence Welk, and the royalties, Dylan admits, have made him a millionaire.

In achieving this success, Dylan has had powerful allies. Not the least of these was Billy James, a young Columbia public relations man who is now the record company's West Coast artist-relations director. It was through James's efforts that Dylan got his first taste of national publicity, but the singer's past was to come between them. In 1963, when Dylan was entering his first flush of fame with "*Blowin' in the Wind*" a song which became an unofficial anthem of the civil-rights movement and a major popular hit, *Newsweek* revealed that Bob Dylan was Robert Zimmerman and went on to suggest that not only was Dylan's name a fake but it was rumored another writer had created "*Blowin' in the Wind*." One part of the story was false – Dylan was the author of the song – but the other part, of course, was true: Bob Dylan was Robert Zimmerman.

Dylan was infuriated by the article and blamed Billy James for it. For two years the two did not speak. James won't talk about the incident at all, but people who know both of them say that Dylan attempted to get the public-relations man fired. Two years later, they met at a Party and Dylan was all friendship again. When James mentioned the Newsweek affair, Dylan put an arm around him and said, **"Thousands of people are dying in Vietnam and right at this minute a man is jumping off the Empire State Building and you got that running around in your head? Forget it!"**

One of the great factors in Dylan's early success was his profound ability to articulate the emotions of the civil-rights revolution, which was developing its peak of power in the early '60's. Recognition of this talent came in dramatic form at the Newport Folk Festival of 1963.

Although he had already appeared once on the program, which is a sort of Hall of Fame of folk singing in action, he was called back to the stage at the end of the final concert. Accompanied by a stageful of folk stars, from Pete Seeger, the gentle "king" of folk music, to Joan Baez, the undisputed queen, Bob Dylan sang "*Blowin' in the Wind*" to an audience of 36,000 of the most important folk-singing fans, writers, recording executives and critics.

"*How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man*" they sang. "*Yes, n' how many seas must a white dove sail before she sleeps in the sand? Yes, n' how many times must the cannon balls fly before they're forever banned? The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind, The answer is blowin' in the wind.*"

Recorded by Peter, Paul and Mary, "*Blowin' in the Wind*" was Dylan's first major hit, and very quickly there were 58 different versions of the song, by everyone from The Staple Singers (a screaming gospel version) to Marlene Dietrich. Almost overnight Dylan was established at the top of the folk music field. Here at last, sighed the folk critics and the civil-rights people, was a songwriter with the true "proletarian" touch, one who could really reach the masses. For two years, Dylan was the musical spokesman for civil-rights, turning up in Mississippi, in the march on Washington, at the demonstrations and rallies.

"I feel it," said Joan Baez, whom Dylan had met before Newport, "but Dylan can say it. He's phenomenal."

For a while, Joan and Bobby were to be inseparable, the queen and crown prince of folk music. When Dylan went to England for a concert tour, Joan Baez went with him. As much as anyone's, it was her voice and authority which helped to create the charismatic reputation of Bob Dylan the folk singer.

These days, Dylan and Baez are not as close as they used to be. When the rough cut of the film of his English tour was screened in Hollywood this spring, Baez was everywhere on the film, in the limousine, at the airport, singing in the hotel room. After the screening, Dylan said to the

film editor, **"We'll have to take all that stuff of Joan out."** He hesitated and then added, **"Well, it looks as if she was the whole thing. She was only there a few days. We'll have to cut it down."**

Far more important to Dylan, however, was Albert Grossman, who took over Dylan's career and, to a great extent, his life. He is not only Dylan's manager, but also his confidant, healer and friend. Until recently, in fact, Dylan had no home of his own. He lived in Grossman's New York City apartment or the manager's antique-filled country home in Woodstock, N.Y.

He appears to be only vaguely aware of the extent or nature of his wealth, leaving the details to Grossman. **"When I want money,"** Dylan says, **"I ask for it. After I spend it, I ask for more."**

Dylan has had his effect on Grossman, too, however. "I used to remember Albert as a nice-looking businessman, the kind of middle-aged man you would meet in a decent restaurant in the garment center," says one acquaintance. "Then, a while after he signed Dylan, I met him again. I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe what had happened to him. He had long gray hair like Benjamin Franklin and wire-rimmed spectacles, and he was wearing an old sweatshirt or something and Army pants. 'Albert,' I screamed, when I finally recognized him. 'Albert, what has Bobby done to you?'"

A measure of Dylan's relationship with his manager is found in the tone and style he uses in talking to Grossman. Even in the most ordinary conversation, Dylan can be almost impossible to understand. He is often vague, poetic, repetitive, confusing. But his flow of imagery can be startlingly precise and original, and the line of his thought brilliantly adventurous, funny and penetrating. So, in describing his music he will say, **"It's all math, simple math, involved in mathematics. There's a definite number of Colt 45's that make up Marlene Dietrich, and you can find that out if you want to."**

This kind of talk is not useful for more than a few situations. Nonetheless, it is the way Dylan speaks to fans, disk jockeys, reporters, acquaintances and, frequently, friends. It is not the way he speaks to Grossman. Then his voice often goes into a kind of piping whine, the voice of a little boy complaining to his father.

Thus, after a concert on the West Coast, at three o'clock in the morning, Dylan was told by a visitor that his voice was not heard over the blast of the electronically amplified rock n' roll instruments. Grossman lay dozing on the hotel bed, his tinted glasses still on, a slight smile of repose on his heavy face.

"Al-*bert*," Dylan cried, **"Albert, did you hear that? They couldn't hear me. Al-*bert*, I mean they couldn't hear me. What good is it if they can't hear me? We've got to get that sound man out here to fix it. What do you think, Albert."**

Grossman stirred on the bed and answered soothingly, "I told you in the car that the volume was too high. Just cut the volume by about a third and it'll be all right." Grossman went back to sleep, very much like an occidental Buddha, snoring lightly. Dylan was satisfied.

Grossman's formidable managerial talent is displayed most clearly when Dylan is on concert tour. From Grossman's New York office, the logistics of moving the singer and his crew from concert to concert halfway around the world are worked out with an efficiency that makes the whole operation seem effortless.

On the road the Dylan entourage usually consists of Dylan, his road manager, a pilot and co-pilot for the 19-seat two-engine Lodestar in which the group travels over the shorter distances

(tourist-class commercial jets are used for overseas and transcontinental travel), two truck drivers who deliver the sound equipment and musicians' instruments from stop to stop, a sound man and five musicians – two guitarists, a drummer, pianist and organist. Grossman flies out from time to time to hear a concert or two and then returns to New York. On foreign tours he usually stays with the group throughout the trip.

Dylan's people are protective and highly attentive to his wants, and Dylan himself, given his status as a star, is neither especially demanding nor temperamental, even when things don't quite go according to schedule.

Last spring, for example, a concert in Vancouver was an acoustical disaster. The arena still smelled strongly of its last guests – a stock exhibition. It was perfectly round, with a flat dome that produced seven echoes from a sharp handclap in the center, and large open gates which let sound leak out of the hall as easily as if the concert were held in the open air. Although Dylan's $30,000 custom-designed sound system filled eight large crates with equipment, it could never fill this gigantic echo chamber with clear sound. To add to the problem, one of the small monitor speakers, placed on stage to enable the musicians to hear themselves play, was not working.

Dylan's concerts are divided into two halves. During the first, in which he played his acoustic guitar into a stage microphone, the sound was patchy; in some spots it was perfect, in others it was very bad. In the second half, however, in which rock n' roll songs were played on the amplified instruments and electric guitars, the music was a garble of reverberation, and Dylan's voice was totally scrambled by the echo. The sound man sweated and twirled his knobs, but it was no use. At one point Grossman ran up to the stage to tell Dylan to stop "eating the mike," getting too close to the microphone and contributing to the electric jumble. The musicians, deprived of the monitor, watched each other tensely as they tried to keep their beat by observation rather than sound.

"Man, that was just terrible," Dylan said when he came off stage and hurried into the waiting car. **"That was just awful. I mean that was worse than Ottawa, and Ottawa was the worst hole in the universe."** He turned to each person in the car and asked them separately, **"Wasn't that worse than Ottawa, and wasn't Ottawa the worst hole in the universe?"** Everyone agreed that it was worse than Ottawa.

"That was really worse than Ottawa, and Ottawa was the worst, terrible, miserable hole in the entire universe," Dylan repeated, with a certain satisfaction. **"Worse than Ottawa,"** he mused, and then laughing, turned around and said, **"and any one who doesn't think it was worse than Ottawa can get out of the car right now."**

Later he and Grossman discussed the problem again, and it was agreed that the fault lay in the arena, not in the equipment. In a better hall or a theater there would have been no trouble. Dylan's concern now was with the hall in which he was booked in Australia.

"Albert, it's no good in those arenas," he said. **"I just would rather forget arenas and play theaters. To hell with the money, I mean I would much rather have a good show. Are we going to play any arenas in Australia?"**

"We have to," Grossman answered, after quickly going through the Australia situation with Dylan. "We haven't enough big concert halls or theaters there. It's not America. The country is still undeveloped."

"Well, all right," said Dylan. "I mean if we have to, but I wish we could just play theaters and halls. I mean that place was worse than Ottawa and –" "Ottawa was the worst hole in the universe," someone chimed in.

"Yeah. The worst in the universe. And this was worse."

At no time, perhaps, was Dylan's closeness with Grossman more important than in 1965, the year Dylan turned from folk music to rock n' roll. He had by this time cut three more albums, two of them, *The Times They Are A-Changin'* and *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, outstandingly successful, not only in sales but in acclaim from the critics and the civil-rights activists. But he came back from a stunningly successful English tour with a feeling of malaise and a desire for change.

"After I finished the English tour," he says, **"I quit because it was too easy. There was nothing happening for me. Every concert was the same: first half, second half, two encores and run out, then having to take care of myself all night."**

"I didn't understand; I'd get standing ovations, and it didn't mean anything. The first time I felt no shame. But then I was just following myself after that. It was down to a pattern."

In his next album, *Bringing It All Back Home*, Dylan broke the pattern. Instead of playing either conventional 'protest' as it was understood then, or using the traditional folk-music modes, he electrically amplified his guitar and set surrealistic verses to the rock n' roll beat.

Ironically, it was one of the album's few nonrock songs that brought Dylan his first great success in the pop market. "*Mr. Tambourine Man*," recorded by The Byrds in a hard-rock version complete with falsetto, was a massive hit. "When '*Mr. Tambourine Man*' broke, we didn't know anything about Bob Dylan," says "Cousin Brucie" Merrow, a disk jockey on WABC Radio, New York. "Oh, I remember a few years ago we'd listened to a single of his. It didn't seem to fit the sound then, so we didn't play it. That was all I knew about Bob Dylan until The Byrds hit with "*Mr. Tambourine Man*" Then everyone was asking, 'Who's this Bob Dylan?' It's the only time I can remember when a composer got more attention for a hit than the performers did."

Then when Dylan released his new single, "*Like a Rolling Stone*," and his new album, *Highway 61 Revisited*, the folk fans knew Bobby was going to be a teen-age idol, and if he was a teen-age idol he wasn't theirs anymore. For people who had thought they owned Bob Dylan it was a bitter disappointment, and Dylan lost a great many people he thought were his friends. "A freak and a parody," shrieked Irwin Silber in the folk music magazine *Sing Out!* At the Newport Folk Festival of 1965, Dylan was booed off the stage. At his Forest Hills concert in September, the audience listened attentively through the first, folk, half of , the program and then began to boo when the musicians came out for the rock n' roll portion. This time Dylan did not walk off the stage as he did at Newport, but fought his way through the performance, supported by 80 percent of the crowd.

"*Like a Rolling Stone*" finally put Dylan across as a rock n' roll star. He wrote it in its first form when he came back from England. **"It was ten pages long,"** he says. **"It wasn't called anything, just a rhythm thing on paper all about my steady hatred directed at some point that was honest. In the end it wasn't hatred, it was telling someone something they didn't know, telling them they were lucky. Revenge, that's a better word."**

"I had never thought of it as a song, until one day I was at the piano, and on the paper it was singing, 'How does it feel?' in a slow motion pace, in the utmost of slow motion following something."

"It was like swimming in lava. In your eyesight, you see your victim swimming in lava. Hanging by their arms from a birch tree. Skipping, kicking the tree, hitting a nail with your foot. Seeing someone in the pain they were bound to meet up with."

"I wrote it. I didn't fail. It was straight." "*Like a Rolling Stone*" climbed rapidly to the top of the charts. It was followed by "*Positively 4th Street*" and then by "*Ballad of a Thin Man*" and Dylan's lead was soon followed by other songwriters released from the inane bondage of the "*I Love You, Teen Queen*" straitjacket. Soon the airwaves were full of songs about the war in Vietnam, or civil-rights, or the general disorder of the world and society in America. It was quickly labeled "folk-rock," and the kids wolfed it down and are listening to it.

Along with the teen-agers, Dylan got a surprising bonus audience – the adult hip intellectuals who had just found out about rock n' roll. National magazines began writing favorably about Dylan and rock n' roll, and rock concerts became the social events of the intellectuals' seasons. Allen Ginsberg said, "He writes better poetry than I did at his age... I'd say he's a space-age genius minstrel more than an old library poet." One Sunday, the magazine sections of *The New York Times* and *The New York Herald Tribune* simultaneously published long articles on the poetry of Bob Dylan, complete with learned analyses and exegeses off the most fashionable academic-journalistic-sociological kind.

Dylan's reaction is predictably thorny. **"The songs are not meant to be great,"** he said. **"I'm not meant to be great. I don't think anything I touch is destined for greatness. Genius is a terrible word, a word they think will make me like them. A genius is a very insulting thing to say. Even Einstein wasn't a genius. He was a foreign mathematician who would have stolen cars."**

Some of his recent songs have brought him new criticism: it has been claimed that the lyrics of "*Mr. Tambourine Man*" and his latest hit, "*Rainy Day Women #12 and 35*" ("*Everybody must get stoned!*"), are all about drugs and drug experiences. Grossman denies it. Dylan won't talk about his songs. **"Don't interrupt me,"** he says. Talking about drugs, he is typically elusive.

"People just don't need drugs," he says. **"Keep things out of your body. We all take medicine, as long as you know why you're taking it. If you want to crack down on the drug situation, the criminal drug situation takes place in suburban housewives' kitchens, the ones who get wiped out on alcohol every afternoon and then make supper. You can't blame them and you can't blame their husbands. They've been working in the mines all day. It's understandable."**

During the past year Dylan has got married, fathered a son, Jesse Byron Dylan, and bought a townhouse in Manhattan's fashionable East 30's. Typically, he has attempted to keep all of this a secret. When his wife, a beautiful, black-haired girl named Sara Lowndes, visited him in Vancouver and attended his concert, Dylan was faced with a problem: two disk jockeys were coming up to the dressing room to interview him, how was he to hide his wife from them? **"Sara,"** said Dylan, opening a large closet, **"when they arrive I want you to get in here."** His wife looked at him quizzically but stepped reluctantly toward the open door. Dylan began to laugh, but it is a mark of the seriousness of his desire for privacy that his wife was ready to get into the closet.

The only thing anyone now will predict for certain is that Dylan will change. **"I'll never decay,"** he says. **"Decay is when something has stopped living but hasn't died yet, looking at**

your leg and seeing it all covered with creeping brown cancer. Decay turns me off. I'll die first before I decay."

3 March 1966
Louise Sokół Interview, Miami, Florida

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 639-640.

A short interview by fourteen year old Louise Sokół just before the concert at the Miami Convention Hall on March 3rd 1966. The interview was later published in the September 1966 issue of the magazine *Datebook* in their *Teens Interview Stars* series.

BY LOUISE SOKÓŁ
AGE 14, NAUTILUS
J.H.S., MIAMI
BEACH, FLA.

When my authorisation for an interview with Bob Dylan came, I did a little jig. Then I rang up Tom Campbell, who's a local DJ and a good friend of mine. He said he could probably get me to see Bob, but that Sam Wood, who arranged Dylan's Florida bookings would have the last word. I called Mr. Wood, and he said I could talk to Bob for an hour, when he arrived in Florida.

Two weeks passed, and the day came. When I got to Bob's dressing room, I was greeted by Sam Wood. Members of Bob's backup group and a couple of DJ's were in the room. Bob was alone on one side of the room, reading a book. He was wearing grey pants, a white shirt, and sandals. His hair was all messed up. Sam Wood introduced me to him, and I sat down. We both said, **"Hello,"** and I began asking a few questions. They went something like this:

I read that you were secretly married. True or false?
BD: (laughing) **False. I don't know where this junk comes from.**
Do you think The Beatles have a lot of talent?
BD: They certainly do! No doubt about it!
Do you try to get a message across in your songs?
BD: It's not a message! Message songs are a drag. It's an expression of my feelings.
Why did you change to a rock feeling in your songs?
BD: I was getting tired, you know bored, of the old thing. You gotta change sometimes.
Do you get royalties when others record your songs?
BD: Yeah, I get a certain percentage. I don't know what happens with my money.
What's your description of folk music?
BD: Man, it's weird, legendlike, and mythlike. It takes in everything.
Is it true you once said you were sympathetic to [Lee Harvey] Oswald?
BD: Well, it's pretty sad, someone sick enough to do a thing like that.

At this point someone brought in food. Bob offered me some, but I declined saying I had to leave. When Bob walked me to the door, I was surprised to find he wasn't much taller than me.

That night I went to Bob's concert. It was delayed for a while because a harmonica couldn't be found. When Bob did come on stage with his guitar and harmonica, the applause was deafening. He looked so small and wistful standing up there, but I've never seen anybody hold an audience so quiet before. When the concert ended, I left feeling I had learned something that night.

13 March 1966
Robert Shelton interview, Denver Motel room, Denver, Colorado

Source: *The Robert Shelton Minnesota Transcripts* in *ISIS* #89, 2-3/00, p. 6

The Robert Shelton Minnesota Transcripts

Introductory Note (by Ian Woodward)
This transcript is a bit different, being Dylan himself, and being only part of the taped interview. Shelton headed it, *Bob in Denver Motel – March 1966 / Fragment referring to Hilling and family*. It took place on 13 March 1966. The transcript contains corrections and it is clear that Dylan is thinking slowly.
[Courtesy of EMP]

Bob Dylan

BD: Getting back to the Hibbing thing... it's like... right now I can't give it any of my thoughts... I've thought about it some... I send money, to my mother, a lot of money. I don't come from a middle class family... what you'd call 'a great middle class family ... in the suburbs'... where I live... (did he mean live in the present? R.S.) [Note 1]... **there aren't any suburbs... there aren't suburbs and there's no poor section... and there's no rich section... there just <u>is</u> none. There is no one side of town and another side of town, there's no wrong side of the track and right side of the track. There are farm girls and farm boys... but they're not around only because they are out on the farm... they take the bus in. <u>There's no lines where I come from. There never was</u>.** [Note 2]. **As far as I know, where I live, nobody has anything that anybody else didn't have really, and that is the truth! All the people that I knew had the same things. There wasn't that many people for somebody to be terribly off.** (R.S. Very ungrammatical, perhaps it should be played up a little)**, you know... and having to face everybody else.**

RS: Tell me, where did this Joe Williams... he told me you knew some of his songs at the age of 10. Where did you get this, off radio?

BD: Yeah

RS: Did you get all this at the radio? Were your parents musical?

BD: No! No! (Undefinable mumble) [Note 3] **Minnesota, that's where I lived. It's where I live... it's hillbilly country... it sounds like the mid-west... northern... it's hillbilly country, it's all hillbilly stations... the stations you get and you get the mid-west stations on a direct route from Louisiana... it's right down the Mississippi River, there's a route to it like that's all there is to it... the communications thing... you heard all the music... it went all through the whole land... deep south all the way up to polka bands – Whoopee John and hockey players played the** (mumble) [Note 3], **it was all there. I didn't know any individual songs.. I knew some... I knew "Baby, Please Don't Go" and stuff like that.** [Note 4]

RS: When you were taking off from home, was it more a curiosity to see what was going on or were you trying to get away from the scene there?

BD: No, there was no curiosity to see what was going on... I just wanted to get away, that's all... Yeah, get away IT WAS LIKE A (long thoughtful pause) [Note 3] **VACUUM ... I WAS BORED... I JUST KEPT GOING BECAUSE I WAS BORED, ONLY I'VE NEVER SETTLED AND ACCEPTED BOREDOM... I LIKE, TO KNOW, I JUST CAN'T MAKE BOREDOM... I CAN LAY ON MY BED FOR THREE HOURS AND LOOK AT THE CEILING BUT, YOU KNOW, <u>THAT</u> DOESN'T MEAN BOREDOM.** [Note 5]

Notes

1. To me, it is clear that Dylan talks of his family home, not his present one.
2. The underlining is in Shelton's transcript.
3. Shelton's comment in the transcript.
4. Here, Shelton has typed "(Material here about New York – get this later)"
5. The capitals are Shelton's. It isn't clear if it portrays Dylan's own emphasis or not.

April 1966
Stan Rofe interview, Radio 3KZ, Melbourne, Australia

(taken from circulating tape)

BD: You've more space in Nashville than you do in New York City. New York City is... well, you've never been to New York City but New York City is just a bunch of tenement buildings going sky high, you know. And there's very little space or air or room to breathe there, and it rubs off on recordings too you know. But Nashville is different from that. Nobody... In Nashville people sit around if they want to. If they want to make good records they just sit around and wait all night 'til you're ready. But they won't do that in New York, they get bored and talk and bring you down some kind of way. That's not a put-down of New York or anything like that, but it's true, you know. They get tired fast. It's true, you know…

SR: Sir, you're writing a book. When do expect your book to be released and what's the book all about.

BD: It should be released in August or September. It's rhythmic. As far as what happens in the book, I can't really explain that because it's all self-explanatory enough. [tape cuts]

12 April 1966
Sydney Airport Press Conference, Sydney, Australia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 81-86.

The year, 1966, offers a wealth of interviews and press conferences, many of which are admirably covered in *The Ghost Of Electricity* by John Bauldie. I don't want to repeat any of them word for word (in this, the first, volume anyway). So I've chosen a few interviews to present from different angles.

The first, the Sydney Airport press conference provides an insight from one direction, that of the Australian journalist Craig McGregor. There were apparently two Sydney press conferences, this one at the airport and a subsequent one at Dylan's Kings Cross Hotel. This press conference contains several interviews within interviews as you'll see. There's a brief and shambolic television interview due to be broadcast two days later and then an impromptu interview with Dylan by Dylan himself.

No audio tape, video tape or official transcript is known to exist of what Craig McGregor calls Dylan's Crucifixion. I've taken an extract or two from McGregor's article in The *Sydney Morning Herald* for April 13th and expanded this considerably with details from McGregor's introductory chapter to his Retrospective: additional quotes have been taken from Bauldie's *The Ghost Of Electricity*.

LOOKING RATHER LIKE AN EXTRA FROM *THE TEN COMMANDMENTS*, MR. BOB DYLAN ARRIVED IN SYDNEY YESTERDAY AND WITHIN HALF AN HOUR HAD CONDUCTED AN ANTI-INTERVIEW, PUT DOWN THE PRESS – AND PARODIED THE WHOLE PERFORMANCE.

SYDNEY AIRPORT. Early morning. April 1966. Gulls, bitumen tarmac, hip kids in knee-high boots, camel-hair jeans, Zapata moustaches. Boeing 707, in from Honolulu. Pause. Doors open, the first passengers disgorged, blinking in the unfamiliar sunlight. Another pause. Then Dylan. I assumed it must be he, though he looked smaller and frailer than I'd imagined. Descending the gangplank he was talking to some of the Band, but walking across the tarmac he was by himself: a tiny, lonely figure. Customs. Then, at last, into the main hall, where fans besieged him. He gallantly accepted a fifty-foot pop-art fan letter glued together from magazine and newspaper clippings, signed himself "The Phantom". Black corduroy suit, black suede high-heeled calf-length zipper-sided boots, dark glasses, a halo of long ringleted hair: Dylan, 1966. He held up his hands (look, no stigmata), turned away and made it across to the press room, where the TV cameras and reporters were waiting. The Band, wearing dark glasses and sombreros, and the greying bulk of Albert Grossman followed. Dylan was smiling, being obliging. He settled himself down on a sofa for the press conference. The arc lights switched on. I sat down beside him, to his left. Downcast eyes, hooked Jewish nose. The crucifixion was about to begin.

It was soon obvious that nearly everyone there had already made up his mind about Dylan. Or their editors had. He was either a Protest Singer, or a Phony, or preferably both; and they weren't going to be put off by any of that shit about him being someone who wrote songs. Nobody welcomed him: the first questions were hostile, brutal, stupid. Dylan tried to answer seriously at first, but it was a lost cause. A few mumbles. Nobody listened. A young guy from the Sun kept interrupting with a line of questions drilled into him by his paper: get him to admit he's a phony, that all this protest stuff is bullshit...

Isn't all this protest music a fake?

BD: Huh?

It's phony isn't it?

BD: Huh?

Are you a protest singer?

BD: I haven't heard that word for a long time. Everybody knows there are no protest songs any longer – it's just songs.

If you aren't a protest singer, why does everybody say you are?

BD: Everybody? Who does?

Time magazine

BD: Oh, yeah.

Why have you started playing rock and roll?

BD: Is that what they call it?

Why have you gone commercial?

BD: I have not gone commercial. I deny it (with bible-swearing hand upraised). **Commercial – that's a word that describes old grandmothers that have no place to go.**

Do you always have a troupe of twelve people travel with you?

BD: Twelve?

Are they all members of your band?

BD: Er, yeah, that's right (with a sideways look at Uncle Albert standing grinning against the wall) **– they're all just members of my band.**

Why don't you play by yourself? Why do you need so many? Is this all a stunt? Are you a professional beatnik?

BD: Huh?

Are you a professional beatnik?

BD: Well, I was in the brigade once – you know, we used to get paid money – but they didn't pay me enough, so I became a singer.

Why do you wear those crazy clothes?

BD: I look very normal where I live. I'm conservative by their standards.

Does it take a lot of trouble to get your hair like that?

BD: No, you just have to sleep on it for twenty years.

What does your family think of you?

BD: I don't see my family anymore – they're out in the Midwest.

Why don't you see them?

BD: Well, I would never be able to find them.

What would you be if you weren't a songwriter?

BD: A ditch digger called Joe.

As the lights burned the pace warmed up.

Are you an atheist? Are you an agnostic? Are you a pacifist? Are you against war? Are you for war? What's your message? Are people important to you.

BD: People are deathly important to me.

What's your real-name?

BD: William-double-yew-Kasonavarich

Why did you change it?

BD: Wouldn't you change yours if you had a name like William-double-yew-Kasonavarich? I couldn't get any girlfriends.

Dylan kept his cool throughout, answering each question in a mumbled hip patois, and had a gracious word for everyone – including Pete Seeger ("**rambustacious**") and the Beatles songs ("**side-splitting**"). I asked a couple of questions, but they got swamped in the torrent of hostility. Dylan didn't need any help. In the end I got up and walked across to the side of the pressroom,

where Grossman and the Band were standing watching the circus. "They don't even realise he's putting them down," I said to Grossman. He grinned.

Dylan made one or two attempts to get across. He wrote songs, he said, for himself; it was just an accident that other people liked them. Why didn't he write songs about Negroes? What? Why didn't he...?

He didn't write songs about Negroes because all people were different and **you have no respect for me, sir, if you think I could write about Negroes as Negroes instead of as people**. And he had changed his name to Dylan not because of the Welsh poet ("**I don't care for Dylan Thomas**") but because his mother's name was Dillon – at this stage he was still peddling that line. And the best song he'd written, he thought, was Like A Rolling Stone, because the words and music came together there and usually they didn't.

(Additional quotes from Bauldie's *Ghost Of Electricity*):

How does it feel to be a popular hero?
BD: I don't regard myself as a popular hero. I know I'm not, so how could I be?
How would you describe yourself?
BD: I don't describe myself. How do you describe yourself?
I have no idea, but I don't have to sell your talent.
BD: Neither do I! Write whatever you like. I'm a tree-surgeon if you like.
How do you spend the money you get from being a Folk-Pop singer?
BD: I don't know how much money I've got. I haven't begun to spend it yet. I have people to look after that. I'm not a businessman.
What do you believe in?
BD: I believe in you. I believe in things I can see. Don't you?
Your songs often have a pacifist flavor. Are you anti-war? Do you support anti-war movements?
BD: No. I have no feelings about war.
How do you feel about the acceptance of your songs and anthems by the Civil Rights Movement in America?
BD: I'm not pro-Negro. I'm not anti-Negro. I have no feeling I care to discuss with you. I don't care what people say, my songs don't deal about color discrimination or the horror of young boys being killed in wars. This doesn't disturb me at all. In fact, I'm quite happy about the state of the world. I don't want to change it. I wouldn't write about Negroes if you paid me $1,000, because all people are different and you have no respect for me, sir, if you think I would write about Negroes as Negroes instead of as people.
Is there any general theme behind your songs?
BD: Yes. They're all about the Second Coming.
When do you expect that?
BD: When people don't wear clothes any more.
How do American pressmen respond to you?
BD: They think I'm beautiful, loving, charming and clean. I'm only obscene when I get mad.
Who do you admire?
BD: A songwriter called Sheldon Orthogity. His songs are the words you say without knowing it. And Rory Calhoun, an ex-cowboy actor.
What do you think about poets such as Sandburg and Eliot?
BD: Carl Sandburg and T. S. Eliot aren't poets. Their words don't sing. They don't come off the paper. They're just super-romantic refugees who would like to live in the past. I never did admire them. They are people who have been respected as poets. It's a bad thing to say, but it's true.

Dylan Thomas

BD: I don't like him either. You can't feel Dylan Thomas.

What's your message?

BD: Don't talk to me about a message, man. I don't have any messages. *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Look*, *Life*, and *the Ladies Home Journal* call me a protest singer, but I'm not a protest singer. I am not a social commentator.

What are your impressions of Australia?

BD: Australia isn't a very nice place for lots of people – people like Orientals and Negroes.

Perhaps you'd better be careful what you say.

BD: I don't care what I say. I don't live here. Australia has about eleven million people, right? America is about the same size. There must be some reason why there are only eleven million people in Australia. Maybe it's 'cause they don't play baseball here.

And now back to McGregor: -

At last the reporters gave it away. (In print they all attacked him. A PHONY! A CHARLATAN! They might as well have stayed at home). Then Dylan gave a separate interview to a bland, buttoned-down, sincere-suited TV smoothie. The interviewer started well, but the pauses got longer and longer and the questions more and more distraught as he ran into Dylan's rapid-fire, surrealistic responses. Finally he asked whether Dylan, having written the well-known song "God's On Our Side" (sic) was deeply religious?

"**Yes I am deeply religious,**" said Dylan. "**But I don't ask other people what they're deeply religious about.**" Pause "**I believe in numbers.**"

The interviewer ran a sticky finger around his collar, stumbled to a dead halt. Silence. The camera whirred, the lights blazed. Dylan looked thoughtfully at his boots. The interviewer opened his mouth. "CUT" he shouted at the cameraman.

There was another long, agonizing silence while the interviewer tried to think of what to say next. At last he succeeded. The cameras rolled.

"Mr. Dylan, is this your first visit to Australia?"
"**Yes**".
Silence
"CUT" shouted the interviewer.

By this time Grossman and Robbie Robertson were rolling in the aisles. The press disappeared. Dylan was left alone, stretched out on the settee like an Ottoman seductress. "Hey, Bob – why don't you interview yourself?" Grossman yelled at him. Immediately, moving swiftly between settee and interviewer's seat, Dylan improvised an instantaneous parody of everything that had just happened.

BD: How long is it since you saw your mother?
BD: About three months.
BD: Why don't you see her more often? Doesn't she approve of your music?
BD: Well my mother doesn't approve of it but my grandmother does.
BD: I see you've got about twelve people there with you: what's that, a band? Don't you play pure music any longer?
BD: No man, that's not a band with me. They're all friends of my grandmother...

It went on and on, a hilarious spoof, but by this time I was laughing too much to take notes.

12 April 1966
Ron Saw Interview, Sydney, Australia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1001-1003.

On arrival at Sydney Airport on Tuesday April 12th 1966, Dylan gave his first Press Conference of the Australian Tour. This was followed by a second and smaller Press Conference at the King's Cross Hotel. Later in the day a select band of reporters was allowed into Dylan's hotel suite but it seems that some chose to help him watch TV whilst others tried harder to search behind the enigma that was Dylan. Two of those reporters were Uli Schmetzer and Ron Saw.

Ron Saw's views of the proceedings were published in the *Sydney Daily Mirror* the next day, April 13th 1966.

JUST HOW DO YOU TALK TO A GENIUS?

The first picture I ever saw of Bob Dylan showed him sitting in a tree. It was one of the illustrations to a piece about him in the *New York Herald Tribune*, and it gave my mind a pretty bad time.

Dylan was shown sitting in a tree about ten feet from the ground. Below him, watching him, stood a small child in baggy trousers. I don't know what he was doing in that tree. Possibly he was thinking. Possibly he was just hanging on. It is even possible that he was in the tree taking refuge from the child in the baggy trousers.

I don't suppose it really matters, but it's the sort of picture that preys on the mind. A couple of times I've woken in the night thinking about Dylan in the tree, and when I went to see him yesterday, I asked him about it at once. **"In a tree?"** he said, **"I don't recall that. In the *Herald-Tribune*? Well, a lot of pictures they say are of me aren't really of me at all, but of somebody else. I wouldn't have climbed a tree. I have a fear of heights."** Still I insist that it was Dylan in that tree, and I refuse to believe that anyone can climb a tree and pose for a photograph without remembering it.

I didn't want to argue about it. Almost everyone came to agree that Dylan is a sort of genius, and if a genius wants to put tree-sitting out of his mind, it is simply churlish to press the matter.

I mention it only because it brought from him the only answer which was even remotely comprehensible.

It has been suggested that Dylan copied his hairstyle from the Rolling Stones. I don't believe it. From the Witch of Endor or Medusa, from Struwwelpeter or even Rosaleen Norton. But not from the Rolling Stones. Dylan's hairstyle makes a Rolling Stone look like moss.

Otherwise his get-up – dark glasses, dark jacket, chalk-striped snakeproof trousers, high suede boots – is par for the course. And were he not a genius, I'd score his conversation as bogey.

"It's been written," I said, "that your moods are many: anger, loneliness, despair, consolation, fury."

"I don't have any of those moods," he said. **"Terror is my constant emotion. Terror of what? Well, that's like asking a happy man what he's happy about. I just deal in terror. I buy it, sell it and make a profit. But I couldn't say what I'm terrified of."**

I tried again. "Folk-singers always seem to be singing about miseries; about the bomb and poverty and denial of human rights and so on. Wouldn't it be a good idea for someone to sing about a few cheerful things for a change? I mean, the Clancy Brothers manage to toss in a few good honest folk-songs about love and fighting and playing and booze."

"Booze." he said. **"Booooze, eh. Boooooooze. It's a word. But you won't knock down any walls with it. Not that I want to knock down walls. I'd run away from a wall."** Silence. I tried to think about Dylan running away from a wall, but I still kept seeing him sitting in a tree.

"Folk-singing," I said at length, "is a rather widely used term. Would you describe yourself as a folk-singer?"

"I wish," he said, **"that I could come under some classification. But I don't have to, so I don't. I try to fall in line. I try not to be noticed. But somehow it doesn't work. Who wants to be an oddball?"** I wrote it down carefully.

"I am," he said, **"a singer whose songs are about joyful subjects. Joyful, prehistoric subjects,"** he laughed sharply.

I tried wretchedly to connect joy and prehistory with the buying and selling of terror, and failed.

Suddenly I realised that I hadn't understood a thing he'd said, and I cursed my shrinking wits and my lack of perception and my presumption in trying to come to cerebral grips with a genius or even a sort of genius.

I began again, bringing the conversation back to the humble earth, tossing in the one word which, it seemed, had ever struck sparks from him.

"Forgetting love and fighting and the Clancy Brothers and boooooooze, wouldn't it be a rather pleasant novelty to have a folk-song without a message?"

His dark spectacles arose like corpulent eyebrows.

"I don't sing songs with a message," he said. **"A message is an insulting way of trying to put your paranoia across. Everybody asks me about messages. In England they asked me about messages. I'm here in Australia to sing songs and they ask me about messages. I don't think they know too well what I do. I don't think they know me here like they do in the States. I don't think."** he said accusingly, **"that they know much at all about me in this country."**

In a moment crowded by guilt, apology and huge relief I realised that at last I was on a mental plane with a genius.

For the first time I was able not only to understand, but to agree.

12 April 1966
Uli Schmetzer Interview, Sydney, Australia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1005-1006.

On arrival at Sydney Airport on Tuesday April 12th 1966, Dylan gave his first Press Conference of the Australian Tour. This was followed by a second and smaller Press Conference at the King's Cross Hotel. Later in the day a select band of reporters was allowed into Dylan's hotel suite but it seems that some chose to help him watch TV whilst others tried harder to search behind the enigma that was Dylan. Two of those reporters were Uli Schmetzer and Ron Saw.

Uli Schmetzer's views of the proceedings were published in the Australian newspaper *The Sun* the next day, April 13th 1966.

THE NEW BREED: LITTLE BOBBY DOES A MESSAGE (FOR MANKIND)

In striped black pants, velvet boots, polka-dot shirt and blue corduroy jacket, little Bobby Dylan, singer and songwriter, was draped across his chair fondly sucking his thumb. And as Quickdraw McGraw and his kiddy cartoon characters played on the television screen, little Bobby clapped his hands and emitted gleeful, squeaky sounds of pleasure.

Pigmy-sized, pallid-faced, with long fluffy hair, Bob Dylan is the latest and strangest of the new breed of mop-haired anti-socialite, non-conformist, pseudo-beatnik comedians to invade Sydney. And although his songs, raved and written about as brilliant, have a message to mankind, little Bobby had startlingly little to say.

In fact, he bore the expression of a man being wheeled out of the operating theatre still partly under an anesthetic. Throughout the forty-five minutes of nonsensical spluttering, ho-hum mumbling and vague gabbling, I received the distinct impression he was trying to say something, but didn't know what.

In the end I chucked in the towel in my search for a person beneath the empty shell, since it appeared to be like fossicking for a pin in Sydney Harbour. And when, giggling like an amused baby, he explained his songs came to him while tubbing in the backyard and blinking at the blue sky, I could believe it.

Asked what he did before he scribbled songs and sung them, he said: **"I was a thief- cats, antennas, radios, y'know."** "Ever caught?" **"Yeah, once by a priest – he converted me and I became a folksinger."**

Little Bobby chuckled and it sounded like a jackass laughing, a teakettle boiling and a hen laying an egg... Here, the kiddies' program on the Idiot-Box changed to *The Three Stooges* and little Bobby stopped encouragingly fingering the sparse virgin growth on his upper lip.

"Look," he pointed. **"I thought they were dead!"**

His courtroom jesters, three musical gentlemen lurching upon a couch, thought this was very funny, dug each other in the kidneys, and broke into hysterical laughter. One was an elderly, grey-haired long-hair. Then there was a gaunt Italian and someone behind orange sunglasses all paying dutiful and awe-struck attention to the spoutings of their chief.

Turning his attention grudgingly away from the cartoons, little Bobby gave the room a vacant stare and asked:
"Why is everybody asking questions?"

Right on cue, laughs from the life-sized stooges.

What did he like?
"Nothing."

Where did he intend to go?
"Nowhere."

What did he think about the present?
"Little."

But if Mr. Dylan was nauseatingly boring in his studied 'act' of pseudointellectual vagueness, two open-mouthed fans in the doorway proved an interesting study. Awed, they sneaked in, hanging on their idol's words at first, but then slowly wondering.

As the ordeal continued, their jaws sagged visibly and they began to wear that stoic, blank-faced expression that usually comes from not quite comprehending.

And yet I'll bet my last pair of pants to a button that the same boys will tell their mates today: "Man, he was gas (sic), way out, a genius, a living genius man, real gas."

As for me, I would have dearly loved to ask the oracle if he used rollers or hairpins, but I was dying for a breath of fresh hair. So I stumbled out, raced down the stairs, rushed through the automatic double doors, breathed deeply the unadulterated, unpretentious, good clean air of King's Cross.

And for once it smelled like eau de cologne.

17 April 1966
Melbourne Airport Press Conference, Melbourne, Australia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 87-90

No audio tape or video tape is known to exist but a good approximation of the proceedings is contained in the Go-Set article of April 27 1966: additional quotes have been taken from Bauldie's *The Ghost Of Electricity*.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO BOB DYLAN
IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW DYLAN ANSWERS QUESTIONS ALL HIS FANS (AND EX-FANS) WOULD LIKE TO ASK HIM

"Why did you come to Australia, Mr Dylan?" Someone asked.
"Well, ever since I was a little boy I had read about Australia. And I had this feeling of animosity and curiosity, you know? And I once had a friend who had an uncle who's cousin had a brother who knew someone who had heard of Australia so I decided to come and see for myself."

All the time the one-time king of folk-music talked, he rocked gently back and forward on the edge of his seat, rubbing his frail fingers together and only occasionally lifting his bleary eyes to meet the gaze of about thirty frantic reporters in the room. Maybe he was just tired, maybe it was the effect of being so high up there in the plane for so long.

The big question for folk fans is, of course, has Dylan really decided to denounce his early "social protest" songs? In Sydney he was reported as having said he was "**not interested in such things no more"**. In Melbourne he told us the Sydney press did not understand the questions they had asked him, let alone understand the answers he gave! So what do you believe?

When asked about his private life Dylan replied
BD: I live among the sceptics.
Then you do not live in a world of reality, Bob.
BD: Living among the sceptics? That is the only real world. There's no real world, what is it?
Do you watch television, Bob?
BD: Yes, I watch Roy Rodgers.
Isn't that a bit below the intellect?
BD: It's not below mine. It might be below yours.
Are you changing your image?
BD: Yes. I'm sitting right here changing my image.
Do you see yourself as a social commentator or a pure entertainer?
BD: See myself? Do I see myself? I never see myself aright. I have no mirrors in my house.
Mr. Dylan, are you a happy man.
BD: Oh, yes.
A happy sceptic.
BD: A happy sceptic? Oh, I don't know what that word means really. I read it when I was in Sydney and I'm gonna use it.
Do you like traveling?
BD: No.
But you have said you like meeting people, surely you do this by travel?
BD: Oh no. You can sit in a room with four walls, and look at the walls, and know exactly what everybody's doing everywhere.
How important to your image are your clothes?

BD: My clothes and my hair are very conservative where I come from. I haven't seen anyone here with long hair.

Dylan was wearing charcoal grey and white pin-stripe trousers, a blue and white floral shirt, black suede boots, and a black high-collared jacket. His hair stuck inches above his head in loose strands and curls.

What is your greatest ambition?
BD: To become a meat cutter.
Would you care to enlarge on that?
BD: You mean a large piece of meat?
Do you see pop music undergoing a synthesis in the same direction as pop-art has in...
BD: (interrupting the questioner) **Pop-art? Pop-art does not exist anymore. Pop-art lasted only three months.**
What do you think of pop-art?
BD: Pop-art is the commercialization of soup-can labels.
What happened to it after three months?
BD: After three months people stopped painting soup-can labels. After three months people stopped buying paintings of soup-can labels. After three months people stopped buying soup! In fact, they picketed the supermarkets. I know, 'cause I was there.
Did you join the pickets, Bob?
BD: No, I was across the road buying a pack of cards.
What cards do you like, Bob?
BD: Oh, Jack of Diamonds, Ace of Spades.
No. What games?
BD: I don't know. You play it naked. That's the only part of my act I haven't got under control.
Were you drinking soup during the card game?
BD: Oh, no. But you have your mouth open all the while.
Why?
BD: It's a defence mechanism.
What do you think of Woody Guthrie?
BD: Woody Guthrie? I don't know him very well. He was a folk singer in the thirties. Ma Rainey is a better folk singer than he is. Alan Ginsberg is a better writer than he is. All his songs are on the surface.
What about your songs, Bob, are they on the surface?
BD: Oh... who knows. I don't know. They might be.
You came here to Australia for the money too, I take it?
BD: I take it.
What questions are you most seeking to answer?
BD: Questions? I'm not interested in questions.
Are you interested in answers?
BD: I'm not interested in answers. I'm a story-teller, that's all.
Are you a member of the Society for Non-Violence in America?
BD: No, no. You mean Joan Baez and all that? No.
But you gave them a substantial sum of money, didn't you?
BD: No. You've been completely misled.
When you were a young man, you ran away from home several times. Are you still running away from something?
BD: If I were running away I wouldn't be here.

And with that, Dylan and his band (together they presented a picture that makes the Rolling Stones look like conservative well-respected men about town) slunk into two huge black Buicks (with green-tinted windows) and were driven to their hotel.

Additional quotes from Bauldie's *Ghost Of Electricity*:

How would you describe yourself?

BD: I am a story-teller.

Is it a good thing or a bad thing that youngsters try to copy you?

BD: It's a thing.

How will you present yourself in concert?

BD: I play with my clothes on. That's the only part of my act that I haven't got under control yet. But I must admit it is not the right way to go about – with clothes on, I mean.

18 April 1966
Robert Westfield & Jim Monaghan Interview, Sheraton Hotel, Melbourne, Australia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 91-92

Taken from the article in the Australian magazine Go-Set of April 27 1966, and follows on immediately from a review of the Press Conference on April 17th (q. v.).

The next day, the first personal interview with Dylan in Australia took place on the tenth floor of the Hotel Sheraton. Present at this informal meeting were Bob Dylan, Robert Westfield (a young artist and photographer), Jim Monaghan (university student), Dylan's cousin Henry, and Al Grossman, Dylan's manager.

Dylan just sat like a puppet – his hair curly, eight inches high and filthy dirty. He was dressed like some weird doll, he wore a wild green-polka dot shirt, tight chalk-lined trousers and bare feet (we felt out of place, what with everyone else lying around in bare feet). At intervals Dylan would scratch all that hair with inch-long thumbnails. He wore a marcasite ring on the third finger of his right hand.

His eyes were just visible behind the pair of shades he was wearing, and he was wearing them because he was more than normally tired.

Dylan said (after ten minutes of saying "**No**"). "**We're friends**". And we sat down on the floor to talk. I first spoke to Dylan about his turn from songwriting to serious poetry, his future film and such diverse topics as communism, and a poet Dylan acclaims by the name of Shelton Aronowitz. We then began asking about pop music.

W/M: Do you rehearse for your concerts?
BD: No
W/M: What do you think of Jagger -Richard as songwriters?
BD: I don't think I like them.
W/M: Why is that?
BD: They say things – try to kid you – no, I don't like the Rolling Stones.
W/M: What do you think of their music?
BD: You hear too much of it. You get sick of it.
W/M: What about the material of Lennon-McCartney?
BD: Great! They started it all in England – they are honest, sincere in their own way.
W/M: What do you think of groups like the Beach Boys?
BD: They've been around too long.
W/M: What *cause* do you believe in?
BD: Cause? Cause? Oh ! *B*ecause.
W/M: Are you moved by the poetry of Yevtushenko?
BD: No.
W/M: Do you like to do concerts in Europe?
BD: I like to do them but I like to do them in Europe.
W/M: How do you feel about American R & B?
BD: That's all you hear back home. Since I was about eight, that's all I've heard.
W/M: Have you been influenced by any contemporary songwriters?
BD: No.
W/M: How do you feel about the particular vocabulary of American blues – the blues poetry.

BD: You might think it's a particular vocabulary, but back home they speak it on the streets.
W/M: Are you a poet first and a songwriter second?
BD: No, I don't think so. I've got to feed him now (pointing to cousin Henry who was in the corner stroking a TOY KOALA BEAR)
W/M: Give him some leaves, Bob.
BD: No, I mean feed cousin Henry who's holding the bear.
W/M: Have all the tickets been sold for your concerts?
BD: I hope not.

I talked to Dylan for another twenty minutes before Grossman broke up the party. Dylan spoke to me freely as he would to anyone not trying to send him up. He's kind and pathetic, but listen to his *Desolation Row* and *Visions of Johanna* and the words speak for themselves. But what about *Rainy Day Women* -whatever-it-is?

19 April 1966
Melbourne Press Conference, Melbourne, Australia

Source: *"No Ordinary Man Is Dylan"* by Alan Trengrove; The Age (Melbourne), Tuesday, April 19, 1966, p 2, "News Of The Day"

THE QUESTIONS FLEW

It was a hot, crowded conference at the airport. Radio interviewers, cameramen and reporters – and many followers who had sneaked in – jostled in suffocatingly on top of Bob Dylan.

Somebody thrust forward a copy of Antoine de Saint Exupery's book "*The Little Prince*" to be autographed.

One interviewer prattled on about a visit to Healesville Sanctuary. Another wanted "approval" for a technique used by the Beatles.

Questions – likes, dislikes, psychological, sociological, racial equality, bourgeois living, pop art and ballads – some silly, some provocative and some just insulting.

Beneath his mop of shaggy hair, Dylan, the acclaimed "king of folk music," rocked backwards and forwards on his feet as if feeling faint from the onslaught. His voice was barely audible.

Some of the queries he threw back at the questioners, others he shrugged off as if they weren't worth the physical effort of answering, and for a few he wove long answers of fairyland fancy from the beat world – nonsensical, but sharply amusing.

PATIENCE

When it was all over, enterpreneur Ken Brodziak breathed deeply: "Thank goodness he kept his patience."

If anybody has been tempted to lose his patience, it was Dylan.

His unusual appearance and thorny individualism make him the butt for conservative censure.

On the other hand, he finds himself subject to many long and far too "clever" analytical profiles in the glossier magazines.

Dylan tries without conceit to explain that he's a **"watcher,"** embroiled in nothing. He's a talented writer, composer and singer with a sensitive touch for interpreting the feelings of the moment.

But the publicity people these days demand non-conformists who are conforming non-conformists.

21 April 1966
Press Conference, Adelaide Airport

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 641-644.

Dylan arrived in Adelaide, South Australia, on Thursday the 21st of April. Contemporary newspaper accounts suggest that the press conference was unorganised and really no more than a series of encounters with various TV and radio crews. Parts of one of those interviews are still extant, and the following appears to be that which was conducted by Roger Cardwell for radio. There are interjections from other questioners.

RC: Do you think you can sing well?

BD: ...I feel I sing great. Most people underestimate my voice, but left alone in an empty room I can sing better than anybody else.

RC: How do you get on in a hall with a lot of people?

BD: Well, it's a hard question to answer. I've had voice training you know. I just sing in front of the microphones in the hall and it rings, you know. That's all. I depend on microphones in the full hall. That's a different circumstance., though, you know.

RC: Who's the man that you first got the folk cycle, or the folk kick, from? It was Woody Guthrie, wasn't it? You were a sort of devotee of Woody Guthrie?

BD: It was Hank Williams.

RC: It was Hank Williams? But he was more a cowboy sort of singer was he?

BD: No, he was a country and western singer.

RC: Well, I understand that you are a devotee of Woody Guthrie nevertheless. Is that right?

BD: Well, I know who Woody Guthrie is. I listen to his music. I even got wrapped up in the idea of him for a certain time, but not a long time, not a long time at all. No more time than, you know, I would take to learn one of his songs really.

RC: Oh, I see. I understood that you were more wrapped up in him than that, and that... Woody never ever became sort of commercial. I just wondered what his attitude would be to your...

BD: He never became commercial because he got sick. I'd be wondering what his attitude would be today if he was around.

RC: Would you say that Negroes are better musicians than the white race?

BD: Yeah, they used to be, but I don't think so any more.

RC: Now why is this? Do you think that you're up there with them?

BD: No. Most of them go to colleges now. Most of them now live in the suburbs. A lot of them do, not most of them. Negro music used to be great music 'cause it was all poverty music, you know. There wasn't any pick and choice. There wasn't any great ones, they were all great. But now I must know myself, I must know, a hundred white people who can sing blues better than two hundred Negroes.

Tape disruption.

...a lot of people are paranoid and a lot of people are afraid, and they have to prejudge things. They can't go to sleep at night unless they satisfy themselves, their minds. They have to talk at the table, you know. They have to verify their paranoia. They have to pre-judge everything. Most people do pre-judge me, but there's nothing extra special about that. Most people pre-judge everything.

RC: It's been said that you can't sing, actually, that the words are the main thing. Would you agree with this at all?

BD: No, I happen to be a very good singer sir. I happen to be an excellent singer.

RC: What about the lyrics you write? Do you think that's more important, or the singing?
BD: My voice.
RC: You like your voice?
BD: Yes sir. I'm a singer. That's why I'm here – to sing. These songs, I just happened to write them.
RC: Do you sit down and think what you're writing, or do you just go ahead and write?
BD: I've answered that question to the television camera.
RC: We didn't hear that. Can you repeat it?
BD: Watch it on television.
RC: This is radio. We wondered if you'd like to answer for this medium.
BD: I answered on the television. I can't...
RC: Which medium do you prefer, radio or TV?
BD: I prefer, er, movies really.
RC: You prefer the movies? Have you any chance of doing a movie?
BD: Any chance of doing a movie? You'll have to ask other people about that. I'm not...
RC: Would you be keen to do a movie yourself?
BD: Would I be keen? What does that mean?
RC: Would you be interested in doing a movie?
BD: I'd be interested to do a movie. I think I'd be very keen, yeah.
RC: At what stage in your life, Bob, did you find this was the sort of thing you wanted to do? I mean. Has it always been that way, or did it just seem to happen?
BD: Always been that way. Course it does.
RC: How do you know that certain feelings that you... you don't want to communicate with people do you really?
BD: No.
RC: What actually do you want to do
BD: Nothing.
RC: You'd rather do nothing, but you're sort of singing because you have to?
BD: I don't have any job that I have to do. I mean. I have nobody that's bossing me. I don't have any assignments, you understand. I don't have anything which I have to get done because I'm gonna lose something, you know. I just have nothing like that.
RC: You feel somewhat restrained? You want something?
BD: No, no. You know, if people are nice to me, I'm nice to them, but if people got something else out the back of their minds, I can destroy 'em.
RC: What, with your songs and lyrics, you mean?
BD: No, destroy 'em. Sit here and destroy 'em.
RC: What about your parents? Do you feel anything towards your parents? Some people say...
BD: I have no contact with my parents. I've never had contact with my parents.
RC: Do you miss this at all?
BD: Miss this? I've never had it.
RC: You never had it?
BD: Are you trying to make me out to be some kind of rebel – James Dean?
RC: No. I just wondered what do you think about other teenagers? Do you think it's a good idea for them to...
BD: I never was a teenager. I never played football, basketball, soccer. I never went to, you know track meets. I never had good grades in school. I never was in the honor society. I never graduated with high degrees. I never took an interest in anything, you know. There just was none there. I didn't know it, that's all.
RC: Well, what is success Bob, really, do you think?
BD: Success?
RC: What is it really?
BD: I don't know. What do you think it is? Are you successful?
RC: Well, I'm supposed to be, in my field.

BD: Well, I'm supposed to be in my field too.
RC: What is it? Money or something? I don't know. I would say it's satisfaction.
BD: I want to hear your words.
RC: Alright. My words are success is having real satisfaction in the job you're doing. Do you agree?
BD: Do I agree? Well, I agree, I guess. Sounds fine. You said it, I didn't.
RC: Do you make money a yardstick, or doesn't it matter to you at all, money?
BD: Make money a yardstick?
RC: In life, do you think that having a lot of money is a good thing or doesn't it really worry you at all having... I mean, you must have a lot of money by singing the songs you do. Do you sing songs because you can make some money out of this, or do you sing them just because you like to sing the songs, and money doesn't mean anything at all?
BD: I consider that an insult, sir.

Tape disrupted.

21 April 1966
Press Conference, Adelaide Airport

Source: *the Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1007-1008.

Dylan arrived in Adelaide, South Australia, on Thursday the 21st of April. Contemporary newspaper accounts suggest that the press conference was unorganised and really no more than a series of encounters with various TV and radio crews. This version which appeared in the Adelaide University Newspaper *On Dit*, provides a different perspective on the proceedings.

DYLAN AND THE PRESS GANG

"Y'know, if people're nice t' me, I'm nice t' them. But if people got somethin' else in the back of their minds, I can destroy 'em!

So said Mr. Zimmerman, alias Bob Dylan, as he continued mentally vivisecting his interviewers at the Press Conference in the South Australian Hotel on the day before his concert. Up until that conference, I had never had any particular thoughts about Dylan or his music. I had heard the man and his music discussed in several quarters. I had heard him damned and deified. And all this simply passed in and out of my mind at the same rate as other apparently superfluous material. However, when he entered the room in a quietly spectacular fashion, with a flowing retinue of folky bums, he could be ignored no longer.

A puff of smoke, exhaled from the region of a small, pale, bony face, announced the arrival of his diminutive figure, fashionably draped in pin stripes, corduroy and suede. Dylan gave the impression that he had just spent two or three hours staring at the reflection of his semi-dazed pupils and sagging eyelids in the mirror, and anxiously teasing his hair into the knotted, sweaty mass of curls that now bobbed into sight.

The significantly perceptible silence over, lights, cameras and microphones swung into action, and Dylan was speaking... or rather mumbling unconcernedly. My impressions of Dylan were formed in the space of half an hour, from his handling of the Press, his tone of voice, general attitude and appearance, and can perhaps best be conveyed through quoting a series of comments he made to different members of radio and television staff:

PRESS: What made you decide on this sort of music for your career?

DYLAN: It's all I can do. I can't do anything else.

PRESS: We've heard a lot about you protesting about this, that and the other. Naturally you're entitled to say you're not protesting, but your lyrics suggest that there's an air of protest.

DYLAN: Well, if they do... they do. If you wanna think they are, I'm not gonna argue.

PRESS: Deep down, you must have convictions about...

DYLAN: Nah! Deep down, there's nothin' but guts, intestines.

The reporter had approached Dylan with an air of superiority and proceeded to attempt to rubbish the man by pretending that Dylan could not understand his questions. However, on this occasion, as on all others Dylan was in a position of power and knew it. He was the master in charge. Thus, faced with the opportunity to play with the Press and their inane little questions, he did just that.

He likes playing with words – especially when they can be used to play with people.

He searched for ambiguity in the questions asked him and deliberately misinterpreted them. He feigned ignorance, necessitating the repetition and rephrasing of many questions. And he picked up sentences and threw them back at his interviewers, often achieving satisfying results...

On some occasions, when someone stumbled across something that interested him, he would perhaps take the matter seriously, as when he was asked as to how, precisely, did he write his poetry, Dylan said, **"I write the same way I drink a glass of water. You know, if you're thirsty, you drink a glass of water. If you're hungry, you eat. That's how I write."**

One couldn't help feeling that the Press were unimpressed. They were also embarrassed and hurt to a certain extent... that is, if their 'ers' and 'ahs' and sudden blushes were any indication. And yet, on the other hand, I'm sure he was justified in his action. He doesn't care about his image particularly. He doesn't really need to. When asked whether he liked money, he replied, **"Yeh. I don't dislike makin' money."** And again, in reply to the question, "What do you want to do with your money" he said, **"I wanna do all the great things you're supposed to do with it. I can't spend it all. I don't know what to spend it on."**

Dylan is extremely perceptive, with a weird sense of humour. He is certainly not dumb, though he may be immature in many ways, in his blatant display of selfishness and in the way he inadvertently revealed himself through his attempts to hide, and to confuse the press.

During one brief outburst, in answer to a question bearing on his early life and his opinion of teenagers today, Dylan said, **"I never was a teenager. I never played football, basketball, soccer. I never was at trackmeets. I never got good grades at school. I never was in the Honors Society. I never graduated in high degrees. I never took an interest in anything."** His tone of voice could have been interpreted as regretful and bitter or defiant. It didn't matter. He didn't care.

I liked Bob. I couldn't help it. The press conference was a ludicrous and tedious affair, and in my opinion he handled it with skill...

23 April 1966
Press Conference, Perth

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 645-646.

This was the final Press conference of the Australian leg of the 1966 World Tour. It took place at Perth Airport just after Dylan flew in from Adelaide. Snippets of the proceedings were captured in this article by John Cornell which appeared in the Perth Daily News. Dylan was to perform that night at the Perth Capitol Theatre.

His hair looks like a home-perm gone wrong. It stands up in sheer terror, curls, crinkles, knots, twines and lumps and looks worse, possibly, than Medusa's. The man with the hair -Mr. Bob Dylan, the American song-writing rage. Dressed in pin-striped trousers, a polka-dotted ill-fitting shirt – and with bare feet – he had several things to say at a Press conference today after his arrival by air from the Eastern States.

This is a sample of what I managed to salvage in a mass interview conversed in a series of grunts, huhs, slurred sentences and occasional silences.

How do you write your songs?
BD: They just come-out.

Why do you write?
BD: People get thirsty they drink, people get hungry they eat. When I get hungry I write.

Does this mean you never eat before writing?
BD: I would never write before eating and I never write on Fridays or Tuesday nights.

Are you a protest singer? (He's been billed as an artist of protest).
BD: No. I protest against nothing. I'm not interested in racial troubles, or war, or nothing.

How much money have you made?
BD: Seventy-five billion.

What do you think of the war in Vietnam?
BD: Nothing. It's Australia's war.

But Americans are there.
BD: They're just helping the Australians.

Some people call you a genius. Do you agree with them?
BD: No, they're just people who haven't any grandparents.

You say you don't want to be thought of as an oddball. Why do you wear clothes like that and long hair?
BD: My clothes are traditional. Why do you wear short hair?

What interests you?
BD: Nothing.

There was more. It was a lie that he didn't wash his hair or clean his teeth. (**"I have four sets of teeth"**).

26 April 1966
Stockholm Press Conference

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1009-1010.

Dylan's first European press conference of the 1966 tour was conducted at a restaurant in the Flamingo Hotel in Solna, a suburb of Stockholm. A tape exists with just three questions and answers and this has been published already in the March 1982 edition of *Endless Road*. Heylin (*Stolen Moments*) refers to some additional questions and a lot more, cobbled together from local press reports, have been described by Bauldie (*The Ghost Of Electricity*). I've used all three sources, relying most heavily on John Bauldie's account.

Q: Say, How do you manage to get your trousers this wrinkled? I mean, do you make them that way?
BD: My trousers? No, these're just pre... I just, had them pressed last week. I don't understand.
Q: Do you trust reporters?
BD: Well, you know I don't... you know I don't. I mean, if you wanna believe what you read. I mean nobody believes what they read. You know... I mean even if you're a reporter you don't believe what you read.
Q: Where do you get your inspiration?
BD: Oh, you know, everything I've ever done in my life and everything I've ever seen. That's all. It's as simple as that.
Q: Would you describe yourself as a protest singer!
BD: No, I'm not a protest singer. In the USA I haven't been called a protest singer since I was a little boy. I sing ordinary mathematical songs.
Q: What does that mean?
BD: Mathematics? It's things like adding, subtracting, dividing, multiplying. The songs are a result of hunger and thirst.
Q: Hunger? At 50,000 krowns a night?
BD: No. But then again I don't write as much as I used to.
Q: Don't you think that 40 krowns a ticket to the concert is very expensive?
BD: Uh? Do people think that it's expensive? OK, I'll check out how much I cost tomorrow.
Q: Is it true that you give money to the US Civil Rights movement?
BD: No, not at all.
Q: Do you earn a lot of money?
BD: Oh yes, an awful lot of money. I don't know exactly how much but I must have saved up about 75 billion dollars by now. I have it sewed up in my jacket, and I never spend it. I'm saving it all up to buy Australia.
Q: Aren't there political messages in some of your songs? 'Hard Rain' or 'World War III Blues' for example?
BD: Not at all. I don't care about politics.
Q: Do you have a message?
BD: No. Do you?
Q: What's your opinion of the Green Berets, the US special forces in Vietnam?
BD: I was thinking of joining them if they want me.
Q: What sort of music do you like?
BD: I like Ravel, Bartok, Beethoven, people like that.
Q: Do you like any of the protest singers who imitate you?
BD: No. Have you heard me sing?
Q: No, I haven't.

BD: Doesn't it feel strange to sit there asking questions about something you don't know anything about?

Q: The literary critics in places like Harvard say that you're a talented poet.

BD: In Hollywood?

Q: Harvard.

BD: Well, they're just about the same thing. Let them talk.

Q: They say you're very intellectual.

BD: Oh really? Well, that's OK I guess.

Q: What do you think of literary analysis of your songs?

BD: Well, that's just fine. I wish I got paid for saying that.

Q: Who are your favorite writers?

BD: Oh, Freddie McFarland, Muggsy Michaelson, Eddie Condor. You ever heard of them? I like Ingmar Bergman.

Q: If someone were to make a movie of your life, who would you like to play the title part?

BD: Oh, Tony Curtis, or Frankie Avalon – yeah, Frankie Avalon. We started to negotiate with Brigitte Bardot about playing a part, but we haven't got an answer yet. We once had a plan that Lenny Bruce should play my mother and Kruschev my father, but Kruschev wouldn't do it. You wanna hear my life story? Maybe we could meet some night in a dark alley and I'll tell it to you.

Q: Do you like Western movies?

BD: Oh sure. I am a cowboy.

Q: What do you think of sick humor?

BD: What's that exactly? Hubert Humphrey?

Q: How often do you comb your hair?

BD: Every time I'm in the bathroom. About every other day.

Q: Why is your hair so long?

BD: Well, most people know that it's warmer if you have long hair, and everybody wants to feel warm. If you think about it you'll realise that your hair is in your head; all around your brain. Mathematically speaking, the more of it that comes out the better. A lot of people who'd like to think more open-mindedly don't realise that it's easier to do that if your brain isn't smothered in hair.

Q: What are your plans for the future?

BD: My plans for the future? To make more money!

28 April 1966
Klas Burling Interview, Stockholm, Sweden

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 379-383.

Immediately after the official press conference at the Hotel Flamingo at Stockholm, Dylan was interviewed for Swedish Radio 3: Stockholm: Radiohuset by Sweden's first disc jockey, Klas Burling. Burling asked all the questions that Dylan had clearly grown sick and tired of hearing and got a really hard time as a result. You have to give poor Burling credit for lasting the distance and carrying the interview through to the end.
Taken from the circulating tape.

KB: Very nice to see you in Stockholm Bob Dylan and, er, I wonder now when you're in Stockholm if you could explain a bit more about yourself and your kind of songs. What do you think of the kind of protest song tag?

BD: I don't, uh,... my, oh God. No (laughing)**. No. I'm not, I'm not gonna sit here and do that I've, uh, you know, I've been up all night, I've taken some pills and I've eaten bad food and I've read about wrong things and I've been out for hundred mile an hour car rides and, uh, I'm just not gonna sit here and talk about myself as a protest singer or anything like that.**

KB: So, but, the first things you did, I mean which got really famous on singles and things like that – for example, in England they released *The Times They Are A Changin'* – that was supposed to be a protest song, no?

BD: Oh my God. How long ago was that?

KB: A year ago.

BD: Yeah, well. I mean, come on, a year ago! I'm not trying to be a bad fellow or anything, but I just, you know – I'd just be a liar or a fool to go on with all this, all this business. I mean, I just can't help it if you're a year behind you know.

KB: No, but that's the style. That's the style you had then and then suddenly you changed to *Subterranean Homesick Blues* with the electric guitars and things. Is there any special reason, I mean, the way you would tell about it yourself.

BD: No.

KB: No?

BD: No.

KB: What would you call yourself, a poet or a singer, or do you think that you write poems and then you put music to it?

BD: No, I don't know. It's so silly! I mean, you can't... well, you wouldn't ask these questions of a carpenter, would you? Or a plumber?

KB: It would not be interesting the same way, would it?

BD: I guess it would be. I mean, if it's interesting to me... it should be just as interesting to you.

KB: Well, not as being a disc-jockey anyhow.

BD: What do you think Mozart would say to you if you ever come up to him and ask him the questions that you've been asking, you know? What kind of questions would you ask him, you know, 'Tell me, Mr. Mozart... '

KB: Well, first of all, I wouldn't do it.

BD: Well, how come you do it to me?

KB: Well, because I'm interested in your records and I think the Swedish audiences is as well.

BD: Well, I'm interested in the Swedish audiences too and Swedish people and all that kind of stuff, but I'm sure they don't wanna know all these dumb things, you know.

KB: No, well, they've read a lot of dumb things about you in the papers then I suppose, and I thought you could straighten them out yourself.

BD: I can't straighten them out. I don't think they have to be straightened out. I know... I believe that they know. They know. Don't you know the Swedish people? I mean, they don't have to be told, they don't have to be explained to. I mean, you should know that. I mean Swedish people just don't have to be explained... they don't, you know. You can't tell Swedish people something which is self-explanatory. Swedish people are smarter than that.

KB: Do you think so?

BD: Oh, oh of course.

KB: Do you know any Swedes?

BD: I know plenty. I happen to be a Swede myself.

KB: Oh yeah, certainly.

BD: I happen to come from not too far away from here, my friend.

KB: Should we try to listen to a song instead?

BD: We can try.

KB: Yeah? Which one would you suggest then?

BD: Uh, you pick one out, any one you say. You realize I'm not trying to be a bad fellow. I'm just trying to make it along and have a nice... get everything to be straight, you realize that?

KB: Yeah, and that's why I asked you, and you had a chance to do it yourself.

BD: No, I don't want a chance to do it myself.

KB: OK.

BD: I don't wanna do anything by myself... for what?

KB: Or against what?

BD: Well, you know what it's against and what it's for. I don't need to tell you that. It's for, for you know, it's for... well, it's for... well, you know my songs are all mathematical songs. Now, you know what that means so I'm not gonna have to go into that specifically here. It happens to be a protest song.... and it borders on the mathematical, you know, idea of things, and this one specifically happens to be... *Rainy Day Women* happens to deal with a minority of, you know, cripples and orientals and, uh, you know, and the world in which they live, you realize, you know, you understand, you know. It's another sort of a North Mexican kind of a thing, uh, very protesty. Very, very protesty. And, uh, one of the protestiest of all things I ever protested against in my protest years. But, uh...

KB: Do you really believe it?

BD: Do I believe it?

KB: Yeah.

BD: I don't have to believe it, I know it. I wrote it! I mean, I'm telling you I wrote it! I should know!

KB: Yeah. Why that title? It's never mentioned in the song.

BD: Well, we never mention things that we love. And that's, where I come from that is, that's blasphemy, blas-per-for-me, you know that word? Blas-per-for-me?

KB: Yeah.

BD: It has to do with God.

KB: Shall we have a listen to the song?

BD: OK.

KB: Which is selling quite well in the States. How do you feel about that?

BD: It's, it's, it's horrible.

KB: It is?

BD: Yeah. I don't wanna, uh... because it is a protest song. Protest songs, really, shouldn't really, uh, we shouldn't really listen to protest songs.

KB: Well, I see it in the way that a lot of people buy the record and listen to it, the radio stations and so on. So a lot of people could get the message in that case.

BD: Yeah. They do get the message. I'm glad they're getting the message. That was a good record too, huh?

KB: How do you feel about earning a lot of money then, if you're not really concerned about it all?

BD: I like earning a lot of money.

KB: From the start you didn't have much, but now you got a lot. What do you do with it?

BD: Nothing.

KB: Not concerned?

BD: No, I don't really... somebody else handles it for me, you know. I just do, you know, the same old things.

KB: When you write a song, do you write the melody or the words first?

BD: Um, I write it all, you know, I write it all, the melody and the words.

KB: At the same time?

BD: Yeah. Uh, the melody is sort of unimportant really. It comes natural, you know.

KB: The very start, other artists used your songs and recorded them and got hits and things like that. How did you feel about that?

BD: Well, I didn't feel anything really. I felt happy, you know.

KB: Do you like to suddenly get famous then, first as a songwriter and then also as a singer?

BD: Uh, yeah. It's all, it's sort of all over though, you know? I don't have any interests any more. I did have interests when I was 13, 14, 15 to be a famous star and all that kind of stuff, but, I been playing, you know, on the stage, following, you know, tent shows around ever since I've been ten, ten years old. That's fifteen years I've been doing what I've been doing. I mean, I know I'm doing better than anybody else does.

KB: And nowadays, what is it you want to do?

BD: Nothing.

KB: Nothing?

BD: No.

KB: Do you enjoy traveling? Performing?

BD: Yeah. I like performing. I don't care to travel, though.

KB: What about recordings?

BD: I like to record.

KB: You got a group now, which I suppose you didn't have at the very start.

BD: Yes, I had a group at the very start. You must realize I come from the United States, you know. I don't know if you know what the United States is like. It's not like England at all. The people at my age now, you know, 25, 26, at this age, like they've all ... everybody has grown up, you know, playing rock n' roll music.

KB: Did you do that?

BD: Yes, I mean, 'cause it's the only kind of music you heard. I mean everybody has done it, you know, 'cos all you heard was rock n' roll and country and western and rhythm and blues music. Now, now at a certain time it's just the whole field got taken over into, into, into some milk, you know – into Frankie Avalon, Fabian and, you know, this kind of thing. That's not bad or anything, but it was just... there was nobody really that you could look at, and to really want anything that they had or wanna be like them, you know? So everybody got out of it. And I remember, you know, when everybody got out of it. But nobody really lost that whole thing. And then folk music came in and was some kind of substitute for a while, but it was only a substitute don't you understand? And that's all it was. Now it's different again, because of the English thing. The English thing... what the English thing did was, they just proved that you could make money, you now, at playing, you know, the same old kind of music that you used to play, and that's the truth. You know that's not a lie. It's not a come-on or anything. But, uh, you know the English people can't play rock n' roll music.

KB: How do you feel about the Beatles then?
BD: Oh, the Beatles are great, but they don't play rock n' roll.
KB: You met them quite a few times, as well in the States and in England.
BD: Yeah. I know the Beatles. They're not playing...
KB: You don't think they play rock n' roll anyhow?
BD: No, they don't play rock n' roll. They're more like... Rock n' roll is just four beats... rock n' roll is an extension of 12-bar blues. And it's a white, you know, white 17-year-old kid music. And it's kid music, that's all it is. That's what rock n' roll is. Rock n' roll is a fake, uh, fake kind of attempt at sex, you know.
KB: But what would you call your style then? The music you sing?
BD: I don't know. I've never heard anybody that plays or sings like me, so I don't know.
KB: There's no name for it that you would try to put on it yourself?
BD: Mathematical music.
KB: Yeah? OK. If you would like to choose a last, final song for this interview.
BD: You choose it.
KB: There's none in particular that you would like more than another one?
BD: No. Well, I'd rather have you play, you know, *Tombstone Blues* than *Pretty Peggy-O*! But, other than that, you know, I'll let you make your own choice.
KB: OK. Thanks a lot then.

28 April 1966
Pi Ann Tillman-Murray Interview, Stockholm, Sweden

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 821-824.

On April 28th 1966, Bob gave his first European press conference at the restaurant of the Hotel Flamingo in Solna, a suburb of Stockholm. After the press conference was over he continued discussions with a small group of journalists elsewhere within the hotel. Later, in his suite, he played an acetate of *Blonde On Blonde*. Pi Ann Tillman-Murray was there in her capacity as reporter for the Swedish magazine *Idolnytt*. She was actually filmed by Pennebaker and appeared in *Eat The Document* (a scene in the bathroom of this same hotel suite). Throughout the evening he showed the author parts of the manuscript for *Tarantula*, which, to her, seemed to be a very important project for him at the time.

Tillman-Murray's article was originally published (in Swedish) in the summer of 1966 and later reprinted in *Bob Dylan In Sweden*, a limited edition booklet by Lars Hols (Good Ol Records Production No. 1.)

BOB DYLAN – an angry orphan with a starved cherub face, framed by a lot of curly hair. Husky voice etching itself into the marrow of well fed members of the Welfare State.

We know his songs – but what's the man behind them like? How does it feel to get thousands of dollars for only one gig, to have a documentary film maker with himself all the time, to always be looked at, written about?

IDOLNYTT followed Bob Dylan during his stay in Stockholm, and here comes the report:

We came to the restaurant well before he was due to meet the enormous lot of journalists, photographers and people from the Swedish Radio and TV.

After having sat there for a good while, we suddenly noticed the veritable avalanche of long haired guys in jeans, and in their midst, Bob Dylan. He was placed by a table with a soft drink and microphones in front of him, and people started asking. He answered sometimes patiently, sometimes in a crazy way if there were silly questions like "How often do you wash your hair, Mr Dylan?"

It's almost unbearably hot, partly due to the strong lamps used by Bob's film photographer. The idea is to make a one hour film of his tour for the American program "Spectacular" which is going to be sent from coast to coast.

When the press conference comes to an end, Bob and his group return to their hotel, and I bump into him in the lobby. He looks at IDOLNYTT, and I try calling our photographer by way of telepathy, but, alas, in vain.

I make small talk with Mickey, the drummer and when Bob and his friends are going to the bar they ask me to join them.

Bob, his manager, Albert Grossman, a 50-year-old graying long-haired beatnik, Mike Risvole, Tito Burn's representative, and yours truly want tea. But that can't be arranged. What we can have, though, is brandy – with tea. So there we are with four shots of brandy that nobody wants... sorry, three. Al Grossman poured his out on the carpet!

Bob's sitting there and silently sipping his tea, until he turns to me and says, do I want to be in the TV-film? I swallow five times and manage a feeble "Yes, of course". Then he is silent again, for half an hour or so. At last we start moving. The filming is going to take place in the bathroom adjacent to Bob's hotel suite, and my contribution consists in me washing my hands, speaking Swedish, while Bob jogs around the bath tub speaking English. I feel rather nervous, but smile bravely and wash myself with unflinching vigor.

When this has been going on for roughly fifteen minutes, Bob says **"this will do"**, and asks me to make some tea. He's had enough foresight to buy tea bags, and there's a kitchenette in the suite.

So I make tea for twelve people, trying to look like that was my favorite pastime at 12.30 in the night.

Bob talks all the time. Most about music, but also of his childhood in Minnesota.

- **There were a lot of Swedes where I lived, and I used to see a girl whose father was from Sweden. He shot at me with a shot-gun when I wanted to meet his daughter. Strange people, the Swedes...**
- **Then there was another Swedish family who had a sauna. I took a sauna there once. First you went in, and everybody brought stones that they poured water on, and newspapers they read, and then just let fall on the floor. Think of it, what a groovy sight a newspaper makes when it's been on a sauna floor for two years! They brought food too, and put it all over the place.**
- **It was cool, real cool. You could feel yourself getting lighter when all the dirt crawled out of you like big grey worms. You got so clean that you almost went flying. And you shrunk. You got smaller and smaller. In the end I was near a breakdown, and they then dragged me out in the snow. I yelled of course. It was nearly 30 degrees Centigrade outside. I wasn't allowed in again, they just kept rolling me in the snow until I was practically dead. Then I got pneumonia and was sick for a month and a half.**

Bob's playing records. First his new one then a strange recording of Indians in northern Mexico. It's terribly late, and he asks me to make some more tea. So I make tea for five persons.

It's getting light outside, the sky is almost sky blue. Cautiously, I take out my camera and start taking pictures, Bob doesn't react.

People have started taking off, and I feel like it's getting time to leave. I make tea for three and wave farewell to Bob, who's changed his clothes for the fourth time. I promise to accompany him to do some shopping at eleven the following day, if my tasks at the magazine will allow it.

Home. Three hours of sleep, then I do some rather crummy lay-outs, for Unilla, the lay-out girl from Halmstad (a small town in the south of Sweden). It gets to be eleven o clock, and I realize that I won t have the time.

At last it's eight o clock – time for the concert.

The stage is empty of people. A set of drums, an electric organ and three microphones is all there is to see. The Concert Hall of Stockholm is packed, everybody's waiting for something to happen in the spotlight.

The curtains are moving. Bob's coming out, and he is met by a big applause. He looks very small on the big stage. He tunes his guitar, drinks some water from the glass on the table beside

the mic. One has a feeling that he's doing these small things in order to postpone the moment of beginning his performance.

I'm sure that many, at least subconsciously, are asking themselves whether maybe he's a nobody, someone who's got his position thanks to smart managers, clever PR-people. Then he acts "difficult" because it's paying. That he's chosen protest songs because it's rewarding economically. This is what we think while Bob adjusts the mouth organ in its holder.

The first note is out of tune, hesitating. Then he braces himself, looking down at the guitar as if to get support. He closes his eyes, becomes a medium for the song which presses itself out of his throat, painfully, relentlessly.

One second he looks like a Belsen prisoner, the other his cheeks are round like those of a choir-boy. His hair makes his halo, further accentuated by the blinding light from the spotlights that seem able to burn to shreds the spindly little form on the stage.

And do we recognize the songs. We've heard them ever so many times, when playing his records, or on the radio. We had the possibility of switching him off if we didn't feel like listening. But here he can't be switched off. Nobody would want to anyway. The text has become alive, it isn't just a string of well chosen words any longer, meandering round the melody.

Everybody in the Concert Hall holds their breath, frowning in concentration, eyes glued to this tiny human being down there in the floodlights, singing of the injustices and meanness in our world.

Deafening applauds. It feels wrong, somehow. There ought to be a silence so that all of us might get the time to think, to digest the words, incorporate them with our own selves.

And then comes the interval. People go out to have a coke, but are considerably more subdued than usually.

Bob's band has invaded the stage with their electric guitars, organ and drums. But this must surely be wrong. How on earth could Bob Dylan's message get to us through the din of loudspeakers, the throbs of drums?

They start at once, and you realize that you were wrong again. The only way is just to let yourself go, to listen, absorb, follow Bob when he sings *Desolation Row* with the microphone cable trailing after him.

So at last the concert is over. A lonely spotlight shines on the curtain where they just disappeared. The applauds seem never ending. The spotlight expires. Bob Dylan doesn't linger on the stage. It is now empty of people.

A set of drums, an electric organ and three microphones is all there is to see.

30 April 1966
Press Conference, Vedbaek, Denmark

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1011-1012.

After arriving in Denmark on April 30th 1966, Dylan proceeds to Vedbaek, a town about 20 miles North of Copenhagen, to conduct a Press Conference at the Hotel Marina. Parts of this gathering are shown in *Eat The Document*. Like many of these 1966 Press Conferences where there are no really accurate transcripts, I have used the composite version suggested by John Bauldie in his *Ghost Of Electricity*.

What do you think of your audience?

BD: Which audience?

When do you write your songs?

BD: I write when I'm alone. When I'm with a lot of people I'm so alone that I have to sing my songs to find out if it's reality.

What do you do when you want to have fun?

BD: Sex. I'm a sex maniac!

Who tells you what to do?

BD: The Bell Telephone Company. The telephone rings and I do what I'm told to do.

Are there times when you can't stand yourself?

BD: How could that be possible? I don't know myself. I don't know who I am. There's a mirror on the inside of my dark glasses, otherwise I don't interfere with my own private life.

Are you married?

BD: I'd be lying if I answered that question, whatever I told you. You'd make me tell lies and you wouldn't want that would you?

What matters to you?

BD: I won't tell you. My head begins to hurt when I try to put feelings into words.

Have you ever been in the army?

BD: No. My feet hurt when I think about soldiers.

Why did you laugh at the start of *Bob Dylan's 115th Dream* on your LP?

BD: I don't remember... Well, wait a bit... Yeah... somebody entered the studio disguised, looking like my mother. Yes, that was it. I just started laughing.

Who are your friends?

BD: I haven't got any friends. I've always been looking for some, but I never found any.

Does the amount of money you're earning now mean much to you?

BD: I don't care about money. Nothing has changed me. I'm not a prophet. I don't care how much money I make, only you do. I don't spend my money on cars and boats and castles like an idiot, but people look at me like a poor fool. Well so I am, a man of the people.

Have you ever belonged to a political party?
BD: No.

Are you interested in politics?
BD: No. The Oracle in Delphi was political wasn't it? And people who write horoscopes make money, OK? I'm a song, not a singer.

It would seem that Bob asked as many questions of the Press as they asked of him if the following report in *Land og Folk* (3 May 1966), the Danish Communist daily newspaper, is anything to go by.

Having held many press conferences, Bob Dylan has learned that most of the journalists who turn up don't know the slightest thing about his music, his art, and that consequently meaningful dialogue with them is impossible. The questions that are directed towards him are usually pointless. "What do you think of Danish girls? Where are you going after this concert? Where have you just come from, and how was it there?"

When these and similar questions came raining in on Bob Dylan in the first ten minutes of the press conference, it all got too much for him. He took out a notebook and pencil himself and asked the nearest reporter: **"Incidentally, when does the sun rise in this country?"** The reporter replied, somewhat taken aback. Dylan nodded. **"Very interesting – I see – yes"** and eagerly wrote it all down. Then he turned to another reporter and asked him when the sun sets, again carefully jotting down his answer. Then he asked a third question:

"And this castle, where Hamlet lived, Kronborg, how long will it take to get there on horseback? You don't know? What do you know?"

"And your favorite music" he asked a woman reporter. **"What's your favorite music?"** "Beethoven," she replied in a cultured voice, "I'm very fond of Beethoven's Symphonies." **"Yes, but I was thinking more of your favorite music,"** Dylan continued. "But it is Beethoven," the woman repeated rather brusquely. **"Oh come on,"** said Dylan, **"what's your favorite music?"**

Dylan's parody of a press conference was perfect, but the journalists were furious at the end of it all. "Who does he think he is," some of them muttered.

1 May 1966
Sven Wezelenburg Interview/Press Conf., Copenhagen, Denmark

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, p. 825.

Sven Wezelenburg had this to say about his brief encounter with Bob at the so-called Copenhagen Press Conference on May 1st 1966. The meeting was reported in *New Musical Express* on May 13th 1966.

SW: Are you married and to whom?
BD: If I answered that question I'd lie to you. You don't want me to be a liar.
SW: Why did you laugh at the start of *Bob Dylan's 115th Dream* on your LP?
BD: I don't remember... well, wait a bit... yeah... somebody entered the studio disguised and looking like my mother. Yes, that was it. I just started laughing.
SW: Who are your friends?
BD: I haven't got any. I've always been looking for some. Never found any.
SW: Does the large amount of money you get now mean much to you?
BD: I don't care about money. Nothing has changed me. I'm not a prophet. I don't care how much money I make, but you do.

Dylan asked reporters questions like **"Where's Hamlet's castle?"** and **"How far is the nearest cow?"** He got answers too.

3 May 1966
London Press Conference

Taken from the *New Musical Express* of Friday May 13 1966. An article by Keith Altham. Dylan had arrived in England the day before and is staying at the Mayfair Hotel in London where he gives a press conference. John Bauldie in his *Ghost Of Electricity* provides full details in his reconstruction based on collated press reports. I've tried to provide a better flavor of the event by quoting from one available source.

DYLAN'S PRESS DECEPTION

Hair bristling about like a Fijian suffering from a severe electrical shock, wearing a blue suede jacket and white striped trousers, Bob Dylan meandered into a suite of the Mayfair hotel last week followed by a squad of cameramen and sound engineers, the latter to record "the press reception".

A large gentleman, with a grey top hat and movie camera permanently affixed to his shoulder, lurched about the room like Quasimodo, alternately scratching his ear and his nose, with the occasional break to "whirr" the machine in the face of perplexed reporters.

A lady in grey denims waved what appeared to be huge grey frankfurters about, but they proved to be microphones attached to tape recorders. We were apparently being taped for posterity.

For some fifteen minutes, photographers exposed innumerable rolls of film at Dylan looking bored on a window sill. Finally he removed his dark glasses as a bonus to the cameramen, but somehow managed to look exactly the same.

Ken Pitt, surely the year's most optimistic publicist, announced that Mr. Dylan now would answer questions.

"Is this a microphone?" enquired Mr. Dylan about a large cylindrical object on the desk under his nose. Having ascertained that it was indeed a microphone, Dylan signified he was ready to begin by giving a slight grunt and shifting his chair a bit.

"Which musicians have you brought with you?"

After this question had been asked again, then rephrased several times, Bob replied: **"You want names?"**.

The reporter said this might be helpful.

"Gus, Frank, Mitch..." mumbled Dylan.

POSTERITY?

For posterity's sake I framed a question which might have been construed as "being aware", as Quasimodo aimed his mechanical hump at me. Why is it that the titles of his recent singles, like *Rainy Day Women # 12 & 35* apparently bore no connections with the lyric?

"It has every significance" returned Dylan. **"Have you ever been down in North Mexico?"**
"Not recently"
"Well, I can't explain it to you then."

It would appear that the States of Washington, Baltimore and Houston [sic] have worked out the explanation, for they have banned *Rainy Day Women* as being an alleged approval of LSD and marijuana drugs. A dubious honour that Dylan shares with the Byrds' *Eight Miles High*, also banned in those States last week.

I tried to get him to talk about Paul Simon, whom he phoned recently in the U. S. and about Bob Lind.

"Never heard of them" obliged Mr. Dylan. With that I declared my innings closed and watched with interest as the others got batted about.

"Bob, your hair has got me worried," said one lady reporter, "How do you get it like that?"
"How do I get it like that?"
"Yes, how do you get it like that?"
"I comb it like that"

Some tried shock treatment: "Are you married?"

"I don't want to lie to you. It would be misleading if I told you 'yes'," Dylan declared and in the same breath: **"I brought my wife over here on the last visit and no one took any notice of her"**.

A suggestion was made that he was secretly married to Joan Baez.

"Joan Baez was an accident" returned Mr. Dylan.

Dylan's good friend, folk singer Dana Gillespie, was mentioned.

Dylan brightened visibly – he practically tore his face in half in his effort to smile.

"Is Dana here?" he asked. **"Bring her out. I got some baskets for her".**

Regretfully Dana was not there and the conversation reverted to monotone inanities again.

REVELATIONS !

We discovered in quick succession that

- Dylan cannot see too well on Tuesdays...
- his toenails don't fit him...
- he considered Peter Lorre the world's greatest folk singer...
- all his songs protest about something...
- he has just written a book in one week about spiders...
- and he didn't know who the gentleman in the top hat was.

"I thought he was with you" he returned, dead-pan.

The lady with the giant frankfurter-mike torpedoed it forward so as not to miss a syllable of this sparkling repartee.

As the reporters filed out of the suite I took one of Dylan's undercover agents to one side (I knew he was a Dylan man as he had dark glasses on) and enquired why a man with Dylan's obvious intelligence bothered to arrange this farce of a meeting.

"Man" he extolled "Dylan just wanted us to come along and record a press reception so we could hear how ridiculous and infantile all reporters are".

I stumbled brokenly back to my plasticine, the sandpit, my chalk slate at the *NME*! But you've got to admit there's only one Dylan – thank goodness!

3 May 1966
Press Conference, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1013-1016.

Having arrived in England just the day before, Dylan gave a press conference at his London hotel, the Mayfair. The *New Musical Express* version has already been provided. This version is taken from John Bauldie's *The Ghost Of Electricity* and is a reconstruction of the press conference based on a variety of press reports.

Will you be playing an amplified guitar in your concerts?
BD: I'm not sure if I will or not.

Does the term 'folk-rock' mean anything to you?
BD: Folk-Rot?
No, Folk-Rock. It's sometimes applied to the kind of music you make.
BD: No. Well, they say a lot of things about me. I'm a folk-singer. A protest singer. A protest folk-singer – no more and no less.

Are you still making up as many songs as you used to?
BD: Yes. I'm making up as many words as I used to do. I'm only interested in writing songs. I don't want to make singles any more.

Who do you think is the best folk-singer in the world?
BD: Oh, Peter Lorrie.

Will you be doing TV shows for the BBC again this year?
BD: Yes, I'll do anything. But I don't know if I'll do them or not. I just get the word from other people to turn up somewhere, and I'm there.

You've been influenced by many blues singers – Bukka White, Son House Big Joe Williams for example – do you still listen to such people?
BD: I know Big Joe, of course, but I've never listened to these men on records too much. Lately I've been listening to Bartok and Vivaldi and that sort of thing, so I wouldn't know what's happening.

How many people are there in your backing group?
BD: Oh, fourteen, fifteen.
What? All here?
BD: Yes, they're all here.
What about Mike Bloomfield?
BD: Who?
Mike Bloomfield. He played guitar on your last album.
BD: Michael Bloomfield... no, I used him in the studio but he's not here with me.
Who is?
BD: Who is? Oh, George, Harry, Red, Jason.
What is the name of your group?
BD: I don't know. I don't believe they have a name.
What are their names?
BD: You want names?
It might be helpful.
BD: Gus, Frank, Mitch.

How much money do you make?

BD: I don't know. I don't know anything. People just phone me and tell me to turn up somewhere at a certain time and I turn up. I never knew when I was poor till I was rich.

Why don't you write protest songs any more?

BD: Ah my songs are protest songs. You name something, I'll protest about it.

Why do some of your songs bear no relation to their titles?

BD: Give me an example.

Rainy Day Women #12&35.

BD: Have you ever been in North Mexico?

Not recently.

BD: Well, I can't explain it to you then. If you had, you'd understand what the song's about.

What are these film people doing here?

BD: I don't know.

Who's the guy with the top hat?

BD: I don't know. I thought he was with you. I sometimes wear a top hat in the bathroom.

Will you be meeting The Beatles?

BD: I don't know.

What are you going to do in Britain?

BD: Nothing.

What about the book you've just completed!

BD: It's about spiders, called *Tarantula*. It's an insect book. Took about a week to write, off and on. There are three hundred and sixty pages. My next book is a collection of epitaphs.

Is it true you're now married? (Here, Dylan points to Jones Alk who is recording the conference with a huge microphone.)

BD: That's my wife.

(To which she replies, "I am the cameraman's wife.")

BD: It would be very misleading if I said, yes, I was married, and I would be a fool if I said no. It would be very misleading if I said no, I wasn't married, and I'd be a fool if I said yes. I'm not going to answer that because I don't want to lie to you. I might be married, I might not. It's hard to explain really.

May we assume that you are married?

BD: You can assume anything you like. I was born married – forty-five years ago.

Are you married to Joan Baez?

BD: Joan Baez was an accident.

A mistake?

BD: No, an accident. I brought my wife over last time and nobody took any notice of her.

So you are married then?

BD: I'd be a liar if I answered that.

But you just said you had a wife.

BD: That depends on what you mean by "married".

Is she a common-law wife?

BD: I don't know what you mean by 'common-law'.

Do you have any children?

BD: Every man with medical problems has children.

What are your medical problems?

BD: Well, there's glass in the back of my head. I'm a very sick person. I can't see too well on Tuesdays. These dark glasses are prescribed. I'm not trying to be a beatnik. I have very mercuryesque eyes. And another thing – my toenails don't fit.

Are you still in touch with Dana Gillespie?

BD: Yeah! Where is Dana? Come on out, Dana! I've got some baskets for her. Put your clothes on!

What do you think about Paul Simon? Or Bob Lind?

BD: Never heard of them.

Bob, your hair has got me worried. How do you get it like that?

BD: How do I get it like that? I comb it like that.

I'm from the *New Musical Express*...

BD: What?

The *New Musical Express*. It's the leading musical paper in the country.

BD: The only paper I know is the *Melody Maker*.

What do you think of England?

BD: England is OK, but I prefer America. America is what I know. It's all there for me.

How do you account for your success?

BD: What I did, I did because there was nobody else around at the time to do it, that's all. At the time when I started there was no folk-scene in America. There was Frankie Avalon and Fabian. Before that we were eleven and twelve and we played rock and roll. Then when I was about sixteen or seventeen, along came Odetta. When the Beatles came along there was nobody in the USA. They'd all become too old. And folk-music as you know it came along to fill up a gap in American music, that's all. Being poor when I was young didn't have a terrific influence on me. Where I came from, everyone was the same, so you didn't know you were poor, because you had nothing to compare with.

3 May 1966
Press Conference, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1019-1020.

The following article appeared in *Disc and Music Echo* – May 14, 1966. This is one of a number of entries covering the Press Conference held in the Mayfair Hotel, London on May 3rd, 1966.

BOB DYLAN arrived in London last week and went to sleep between black sheets at the Mayfair Hotel, London.

Bob Dylan, a thin shock-haired goblin figure with a smile like Brian Jones. A modern day Rumpelstiltskin in dark glasses.

Bob Dylan arrived preceded by an almost violent reputation for being rude and uncooperative.

He is rude – to people whom he considers ask stupid questions. He is uncooperative – he doesn't like giving up his precious free time for individual interviews.

But Bob Dylan is also a very sympathetic man with a vast sense of humour.

He explained why he was wearing dark glasses.

"I have glasses at the back of my head too. Look. I'm not trying to come on like a beatnik. I have to wear them under prescription because my eyes are so bad."

He said he had brought his eight-piece backing group with him and a lot of new songs that hadn't been recorded.

Dylan has been accused of writing non-protest songs these days. His anti-war songs are few. But his anti-love songs are many.

"All my songs are protest songs." he said. **"All I do is protest. You name it and I'll protest against it."**

"I don't really know what I'm doing from one day to the next I just get a phone call that says be here or there and that's that."

"England is okay. But I prefer America. America is what I know. It's all there for me."

And Bob explained why he was famous.

"What I did I did because there was nobody else around at the time to do it. That's all."

"At the time when I started there was no folk scene in America. There was Frankie Avalon and Fabian. Before that we were 11 and 12 and we played rock and roll."

"Then when I was about 16 or 17 along came Odetta. When the Beatles came along there was nobody in the US. They'd all become too old."

"And folk music as you know it came along to fill up a gap in American music. That's all."

"Being poor when I was young didn't have a terrific influence on me. Where I came from everyone was the same so you didn't know you were poor because you had nothing to compare with."

At the Press conference he played with a huge ashtray and then, this man who has said more with his songs than many say in ten thousand words, was asked some of the most ridiculous questions in the world.

Things like a barrage of questioning about whether he was married as though it was the most important thing since the nuclear bomb.

No wonder he lost his patience. No wonder he said that when he was asked intelligent questions he would give interesting answers. No wonder at the end of 20 minutes he said he'd had enough. And left to go to his room and play his upright piano.

3 May 1966
Press Conference, London, England

Source: *Record Mirror*, 14th May 1966

YOU NAME SOMETHING AND I'LL PROTEST AGAINST IT: SAYS BOB
by Richard Green

Bob Dylan stuck his head through the window, placed his foot on the window ledge and—from outside—asked: **"Is anyone in here?"** This performance was way up in the Mayfair Hotel where an alleged press conference was taking place.

For a reason known only to himself, Dylan had climbed out of a window, across a balcony and on to the ledge adjoining it. The fact that if he slipped he would almost certainly be killed didn't seem to worry him. In fact, he came close to smiling about his little adventure.

When he finally rejoined the swarm of reporters and photographers inside, he sat at a table facing them, covering his mouth with his hand and asked: **"Is this a microphone?"** It was.

We were told that "Mr Dylan is prepared to answer any of your questions," and the session got under way. Until then, I'd always thought that Juke Box Jury was the funniest thing ever. But Dylan's handling of the press left that standing.

"Are you married?" asked one man. **"I'd be a liar if I answered that,"** replied Dylan. **"And I don't lie."** The man persisted: "Well, tell the truth, then." Said Dylan: **"I can't answer your question. It would be foolish of me."**

An American woman who was clutching a salami sausage which transpired to be a microphone smiled and the reported asked: "Is she your wife?"—**"Who? Oh, her? Yeah, you can say she's my wife,"** Dylan pronounced—"No, my husband wouldn't like it," said the woman spoiling the whole game.

This sort of thing went on for a long time. When Dylan was asked why he wrote songs that bore no relation to the title, he asked for an example. He was told that 'Rainy Day Women' was a case in point and he commented: **"Have you ever been in North Mexico? If you had, you'd understand what the song was about."** How useful.

Someone decided to bring the marriage bit up again and wondered if Dylan was married to Joan Baez. **"Joan Baez was an accident,"** said the singer. "A mistake?" asked the reporter. **"No, an accident. I brought my wife over last time and nobody took any notice of her."**

At last an admission. "So you are married, then?"—**"I'd be a liar if I answered that."**—"But you just said you had a wife."—**"That depends on what you mean by married."**—"Is she a common-law wife?"—**"I don't know what you mean by common-law."**

This type of exchange was repeated often, but Dylan wouldn't give or take an inch. Asked of it was fair to assume that he was married, he said: **"You can assume what you like."** Asked if he had any children, he said: **"Every man with medical problems has children."** Asked what his medical problems were, he said: **"Well, there's glass in the back of my head and my toenails don't fit properly."**

Dylan's bunch of assorted film cameramen and sound recordists were happily enjoying the farce which was obviously being staged for their benefit. They continually trained cameras on the reporters and pushed weird microphones at people who spoke.

"Why don't you write protest songs anymore?" somebody wanted to know. **"All my songs are protest, you name something and I'll protest about it,"** Dylan pointed out. Then he laughed at a photographer who was sitting on the floor.

Dylan in a series of replies, informed us that he didn't have a name for his backing group, didn't know how much he earned and had no idea where he would be appearing while here.

Then somebody mentioned folk singer Dana Gillespie and at once Dylan brightened up. He laughed out loud, smiled broadly and asked: **"Yeah, where is Dana. Come on out, Dana. I've got some baskets for her. Put your clothes on."**

Obviously some connection there, but nobody was giving anything away. Until that night when Dylan went to Blaises to see his friend John Lee Hooker. With him was Dana Gillespie. She was smiling nervously at people and Dylan was talking a language of his own. English words but used in a sequence of phrases that could be understood only by his close friends. And there were plenty of them.

Three nights later, Dana Gillespie came up to me in the street and said: "Do you know who's coming back tomorrow? B.D." Could it be possible?

3 May 1966
Max Jones Interview, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1017-1018.

This interview appeared in the *Melody Maker* of May 14th 1966. This is another version of the Mayfair Hotel Press Conference.

WILL THE REAL BOB DYLAN PLEASE STAND UP?
Max Jones meets the mystical Mr. Dylan

Chatting up Bob Dylan is not the simplest job in the world. It used to be easier, but as he gets older he seems to grow more and more fed-up. with questions.

Very difficult it is getting him alone. When you've failed in that, the next hindrance is his reluctance to impart information. It's not that he won't answer. But his replies, sometimes oblique and often designed to send-up, carry vagueness to the borders of evasion.

This is understandable with the personal stuff: are you married? Will you be meeting the Beatles? (**"I don't know"**) or do you have a marriage certificate? (**"Why are you so interested in what I've got?"**).

It is harder to see reason for equivocation on the subject of what instruments he'll be playing on the tour. Hearing that he was booed at a U.S. concert last year when he emerged with an electric guitar for the second half, and greeted by mass shouts of "we want the real Dylan," I wanted to know if he'd be using amplified guitar over here.

"I'm not sure if I will or not," was the best I could get.

At times the answers are amusing more often confusing. Asked if the label folk-rock, sometimes applied to his current music making, meant anything to him, he queried back at me: **"Folk-rot?"**

When we'd established the term, he shook his head. **"No, well, they say a lot of things about me. I'm a folk singer. A purist folk singer, no more and no less."**

As I had just been reading an American interview which said Dylan disowns all the folk songs he wrote and the protest songs that made him famous, this last was on the confusing side, I pressed on;

I read that you no longer sing protest songs, Why is that?

"Who said that?" he mumbled; then, warming to the theme (for him): **"All my songs are protest songs. All I do is protest. You name it, I'll protest about it."**

Are you still making up as many songs as you used to do?

"Lots. I'm making up as many words as I used to. I'm only interested in writing songs. I don't want to make singles anymore."

Who did Dylan think was the best folk singer in the world, someone wished to know?

"Oh, Peter Lorrie."

Why did you write songs that bore no relation to the lyrics, such as *'Rainy Day Women Nos. 12&35'*?

"Oh, it's related to the song alright. But it's hard to explain it unless you've been in North Mexico for six straight months."

Will you do TV shows for the BBC again this year?

"Yes, I'll do anything. But I don't know if I'll do them or not. I just get the word from other people to turn up somewhere and I'm there."

To raise the level of the conversation a bit, I injected the names of Bukka White, Son House and Big Joe Williams. Did Dylan listen to such blues singers?

"I know Big Joe, of course. But I never listen to these men on records too much. Lately I've been listening to Bartok and Vivaldi and that sort of thing. So I wouldn't know what's happening."

Right up to opening day, there was absolute mystery about the number and identity of Bob Dylan's accompanists. So I asked him how many there were in his group,

"Oh, fourteen, fifteen," he said indefinitely. What? All here? **"Yes, they're all here."** What about Mike Bloomfield?

"Who?" Mike Bloomfield. He played guitar on your last album.

"Michael Bloomfield... No, I used him in the studio but he's not here with me." Who is? **"Oh, George, Harry, Fred, Jason."**

Before we parted, another journalist was questioned by Dylan. He mentioned his paper. Dylan looked blank. 'It's the leading musical paper in the country,' said the reporter firmly.

"The only paper I know is the *Melody Maker*," was Dylan's reply.

One way or another he makes it clear he's not out to win friends and influence newspaper men.

16-22 May 1966
Interviews in the UK for *Salut Les Copains*

Source: *Salut Les Copains* July 1966, reprinted in *Occasionally* #5.

With the uncompromising Bob Dylan

To get from London to the North of England you have to take the M1 motorway, which runs straight up through the middle of the country. While I am traveling towards Sheffield to meet up with Bob Dylan's European Tour, several questions preoccupy me: how would Bob receive me? Had he changed? I knew that in London the special correspondent of Paris Match, the French Television Service and a few other French papers were kicking their heels, waiting for some authorization (which was unlikely to appear) to join the tour. As for their English colleagues, they'd given up completely. Bob would only agree to meet the Melody Maker writer. "He's even worse than last year", a press official at the London C.B.S. Office confided to me. "I can't promise you anything. You'll have to take a chance."

I arrive at the Grand Hotel in Sheffield Just as a black Rolls roars away, pursued by a crowd of screaming fans. I just have time to catch a glimpse of a halo of shaggy hair in the back seat. It was no good going to the concert hall – all the seats had been sold more than a month ago. All I can do is settle down in the hotel lounge with some English beer and wait for events to unfold. About three hours later, the totally British calm of the luxury hotel was suddenly disturbed by an enormous crowd of people, Bob flanked by two well-built beatnik types. This was the main part of the company. Bob Dylan never travels anywhere without a large number of hangers-on, with differing and sometimes unusual jobs. Last year, for example, he had a barber with him. Amongst these people I fortunately recognised two of my friends: Bob Neuwirth, Dylan's secretary and his friend for seven years, a lively fellow who I got to know well during a few memorable evenings in London; and Al Grossman, his manager, who is almost a fixture in Paris. Al is an easy-going giant of a man, who appreciates pretty girls, good wine and French cooking. With his silvery hair hanging over his shoulders, he looks like a beatnik who has aged gracefully.

Without waiting any longer, I hand him the bottle of Beaujolais wine, that I owed him, selected from my personal collection. Neuwirth rushes towards me and claps me on the shoulder. The atmosphere is decidedly relaxed. They invite me to come and sit at their table in the hotel restaurant. A few minutes later Bob Dylan comes and joins us. He's wearing a very tight pair of trousers with violet and white stripes and a blue velvet jacket. His hair flows all around his skull in straight and wiry locks which are strangely curly at their ends. But we are in England – not one of the customers present allows himself to show any surprise or to turn round. A proper gentleman isn't offended by any eccentric behavior.

Bob sits down, grabs a menu and chooses his meal: some sticks of celery and a variety of appetizers. His eating habits deserve to be mentioned. He eats very little, only some raw vegetables and fruit, some pate or some cheese (which he puts on the same plate, making a horrible mixture of food), or sandwiches, hastily swallowed. I've never seen him eat a hot meal. As the waiter leans over, taking the order away, Dylan calls him back, grabs hold of two or three forks, two or three knives and one of the plates in front of him – the table was well set out – and says to him: **"Here, take all these away. I really don't need them"** Then he turns towards me: **"What'll they think of me in Paris? How is it that French people who don't understand English are interested in my songs?"** And, without waiting for my reply, he turns towards somebody else to talk about this evening's concert. Then, turning back towards me once more, he exclaims: **"Ah, yes! Anyway, that's of no importance. People who speak English don't understand me. I wonder why so many people claim to like me when they don't understand anything of what I'm doing. There's only one place in the world where I'm really south of the United States they could understand me as well, but they don't like me because of their**

conservative ideas. No, it's only in the south of Texas that I'm really understood. But why do all these people come to hear me? Humanity is truly made up of too many people with non-artistic temperaments."

At that moment a very young waiter passes by and he stares at our table. **"Oh, you!"** Bob calls towards him; **"Tell me, this Cheshire cheese – it isn't very good Cheshire, is it?"** "Yes it is, Sir. It's an excellent Cheshire cheese." **"Ah, but there's someone here from Cheshire who tells us that this cheese wasn't really made in Cheshire. Do you come from Cheshire yourself?",** and then leaves the unfortunate waiter nonplussed to pass on to another subject. The former moves away with a vague idea of having taken part in a joke, but without having really understood Bob's very unusual humor.

After the meal all the clan met up again in Bob's room: five musicians, four cameramen and soundmen, with a sound-dubbing machine, Tom (the driver of the Rolls, who acts at the same time as a bodyguard), Henry (whose job it is to look after the star's guitars), Al Grossman, Bob Neuwirth, Mr Perry (from C.B.S. London: and the tour director), Bob Dylan and myself, plus a few girls who have been picked up at the end of the concert. In all about twenty people. We have to judge and select the tapes which have been recorded during the concert. This is a small daily ceremony. Lying on the floor, sitting on cushions or on chairs, the members of the tour listen in silence, Whether they have long or short hair, whether they are well-dressed or slovenly dressed, they all have a beatnik appearance which immediately makes them different from the other guests in the hotel. The sound system plays so loud that it could burst your eardrums and confused waiters come in and out carrying trays loaded with cups of tea or bottles of beer. Indeed, the evening will go on late into the night. Bob is taking advantage of this trip to make a film for American television, and these recordings must be synchronised with the pictures. Gradually the clan thins out. One after another, the wisest of them go to bed. So we find ourselves, at about six o'clock in the morning, with just three or four people left. Bob and I amongst them, in the bedroom of one of the members of the band, discussing the respective merits of John Lennon, Mick Jagger and the present day trends in the world cinema.

Twelve o'clock the next day. Departure for Manchester. Bob, Al, Neuwirth, a cameraman and Tom get into the Rolls, the others into the tour coach. I follow them in my car. Immediately after we arrive, Dylan goes up to his room to sleep until concert time. The others make their way to the concert hall to set up the sound equipment that Bob has brought over from America: an Ampex set – (**"The best there is"**, he says).

Three-quarters of an hour before the show, Dylan appears. He has given up his gaudy clothes for a severe suit in black corduroy and a black cotton shirt, with no tie. While he is doing a short soundcheck with his band, the two cameramen and two sound men film around him. They only stop shooting when he's asleep... and even then I'm not entirely sure if they do (it so happens that one of the film crew is sharing his room.)

It has been decided that I will stay in the wings. The first half of the concert passes without incident. Bob is alone on stage with his acoustic guitar. Of his old songs, he has kept only "She Belongs to Me", "Desolation Row", "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" and "Mr Tambourine Man", deliberately moving away from songs protesting about social and racial unrest and moving towards more personal, introspective problems. Nevertheless he is given rapturous applause. But the second half firmly divides the audience. Bob has chosen to surround himself with a rock group, including organ, lead guitar, baas, piano and drums; all excellent musicians, however, who play remarkable music. Unfortunately thin music doesn't please everyone. I hear shouts of "Traitor", "Play some folk songs", "Go and join the Rolling Stones", "We don't need you – we've already got The Animals". However, other spectators applaud warmly. Unruffled, Bob continues his show, which closes with "Like a Rolling Stone". At that moment, a man dressed in something dark, who has been tapping his foot to the rhythm behind me, leans over my shoulder to ask: "That song is great – was that the one that reached the top of the American charts?" I turn around to say "Yes" and – what a surprise – I notice that my questioner is one of the policemen on duty at the concert. What a fantastic police force the British have.

As soon as he leaves the stage, without a wave and without an encore, Bob puts down his guitar and rushes off, flanked by two bodyguards, towards the fire exit, where the Rolls is waiting. Ten seconds after the curtain has come down, he has already left the building. An amazing technique!

In the plane that takes us to Paris, Bob was keen to have Jean-Marie and myself sitting next to him. **"Can you tell me, boys, what I'm going to do in a country where no-one understands what I'm saying? Do you think they'll boo me at the Olympia too?"** As we assured him that they wouldn't, he continued: **"What sort of questions will they ask me at the press conference?"** "Nothing original, you can be assured. What do you think about the Vietnam war?, why you've changed your style of music, what do you think about long hair? That's about it." **"Good. In that case I'll reply with any silly thing, as usual. Do you think I'll be able to meet Brigitte Bardot?... Jean-Marie, will you introduce me to Francoise** (Hardy)**, the only French female singer I like... ?"**

On arrival at Le Bourget, there's a crowd of press photographers, Albert Raisner, the Olympia management and his fan club, all turned out in full force to welcome him, with streamers. I turn towards Jean-Marie, our eyes meet and we burst into laughter, Bob didn't let us down. Surrounded by a few members of the clan, he charged into the crowd with his head down, muttering: **"Let me get through, you bunch of idiots. What do you all want with me?"** He ducked into an enormous Cadillac and left at top speed to shut himself up in the George V Hotel. He only came out twice: once to visit Johnny Halliday and secondly to give that famous concert at Olympia, for which people paid 60F, a seat and about which no one has stopped talking to this day.

SALUT LES COPAINS / July 1966
Translated by Jeff Stevens

23 May 1966
Paris Press Conference, Paris, France

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 93-94

The day before Dylan's 25th birthday. An account of the final press conference of the 1966 World Tour appeared in *Datebook* magazine (*For and By Teens*) Vol. 5, Issue 9 published for October 1966. This is as seen through the eyes of two French school children who were lucky enough to get inside the Hotel George V in Paris. Dylan's questions and answers were interpreted by Jacques Hess, a pop-music journalist of the time. This is the interview where Dylan has his puppet Finian (a.k.a. Charles Laughton) to hand, which he introduced as a "religious symbol".

DYLAN: "MAKING FUN?"

By Elisabeth Jaury (age 15), Lycee Jules-Ferry, Paris, France and Philippe Jaury (age 17), Lycee Condorcet, Paris, France

It was 4 o'clock. I was waiting with my friends outside Bob Dylan's hotel in Paris. Then a policeman said that the journalists and photographers could go in for the press conference. I went inside. At about 4:30 Dylan came in and sat down. How slim and pale he is!

The questioning went as follows:

Do you like jazz?
BD: No.
What do you do with your money?
BD: I wear it.
Is there anyone in Paris you wish to see?
BD: Brigitte Bardot.
What are your pleasures?
BD: Smoking and eating.
Smoking what?
BD: Anything.
How do you feel when you are not with journalists?
BD: I feel fine.
What do you think when you look at yourself in a mirror?
BD: I never look at myself in a mirror.
Do you have a special way of sleeping?
BD: One hand under my leg, the other one on my ear (he shows us at the same time).
Which American pop singers do you like?
BD: Nancy Sinatra... (plus names I didn't understand).
What do you think of death?
BD: Captivating.

(A cute girl asks a question in French, Dylan answers, "Oui, oui," then asks the translator what she said.)

Do you like girls?
BD: I like everybody.
Are you married?
BD: I'd lie if I answered.

Do you think you're living in a foolish world?

BD: Foolish? No.

Do you know what a comb is?

BD: No.

Then Dylan said, "**It's all over now**," got up, and left. I took a picture and asked for an autograph. I went home pleased with my day, wondering if Bob Dylan was not making fun at us.

23 May 1966
Hotel Georges V, Paris Press Conference, Paris, France

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 827-832.

The Paris Press Conference has already been touched on in brief (See Volume 2, page 93). In John Bauldie's The Ghost Of Electricity John provides a transcript of this happening, describing it as – "the transcript which follows is a reconstruction based on press reports of the event". I have been unable to find any recording of the Conference. For the following entry I have used the book *Dylan* by Ducray, Manoeuvre, Muller and Vassal the first edition of which also contains what appears to be another reconstruction from various reports. The translation which follows is my own. The versions of Bauldie and Ducray et al. have certain similarities but some substantial differences. There are many comments which only appear in the Ducray version and others, vice-versa. I have appended entries by Bauldie which do not appear in the Ducray version.

The Press Conference took place on the afternoon of Monday May 23rd at the prestigious Georges V Hotel. Dylan's interpreter was Jacques Hess.

Just a little snippet to get you in the mood – the following is an account of a discussion between Bob and a reporter from *Salut Les Copains* on the flight from London to Paris.

"What questions are they going to ask at the Press Conference?"
"Nothing important, don't worry. What you think about the war in Vietnam, why you changed your style, what you think of long hair, that kind of stuff."
"Good, in that case I'll say the first thing that comes into my head."

PP = Members of the Press.

PP: What did you think of your first night in Paris?
BD: It was very dull.

PP: Do you have something special to express when you sing?
BD: No.

PP: What music do you like apart from folk music?
BD: Folk music interests me in particular. I like traditional music.
PP: Do you like jazz?
BD: No.

PP: Do you consider yourself a writer?
BD: No.

PP: What do you do with all your money?
BD: I carry it on me (showing his clothes)**.**

PP: You've been criticised about making money from the war in Vietnam when people are being killed in that same war. What do you think of that?
BD: I've not made any money from Vietnam.

PP: Who is your favorite poet and your favorite philosopher?
BD: I don't know any philosophers and only a few poets – Francois Villon.

PP: Does the artistic interest of your work justify the mass hysteria that you arouse?
BD: I don't really know what you mean by "artistic".

PP: How do you get on with Pete Seeger and Joan Baez?
BD: Neither one has anything to do with me. (Dylan raises his arms irritably)

PP: Do you like luxury?
BD: Naturally.

PP: What do you think about meeting Hugues Aufray in Paris?
BD: I don't know... But I enjoyed meeting Brigitte Bardot.

PP: What gave you the idea of singing folk songs
BD: In 1959, there were adverts everywhere – "sing folk songs".

PP: What are your pleasures in life?
BD: Smoking and eating.
PP: What do you smoke?
BD: Anything.

PP: Why do you have a puppet by your side?
BD: It's the puppet that follows me everywhere.
PP: What does it represent? A symbol? A fetish? A mascot?
BD: It's a religion, of tears and mourning.

PP: Do you have any influence on the average American?
BD: I don't know any average Americans.

PP: Do you like women?
BD: I like everybody.

PP: What do you think of death?
BD: Very interesting, fascinating.

PP: Do you recognise yourself as the leader of the protest singers?
BD: I don't know what you're saying. These are the words of journalists, not my own.

PP: Are you free?
BD: Yes, free of you. Free to believe, free vis-à-vis myself.
PP: Do you consider yourself free if you don't have freedom of movement?
BD: I don't have freedom of movement, but I am free.

PP: Have fame and fortune changed you?
BD: Not at all.

PP: What do you think of American politics with regard to Vietnam?
BD: It's not as simple as that.
PP: What do you think of American politics in 1944 when the Americans intervened in Europe?
BD: Is that an easy question for you to ask?
PP: It's very easy for me.
BD: I don't answer easy questions.

PP: There is a saying in France that “ridicule kills”.
BD: I don’t believe the truth of that saying.

PP: Do you think that narcotics can inspire?
BD: Do you, yourself, take drugs?
PP: Sometimes.
BD: Then you ought to know!
PP: What are your next topics of inspiration?
BD: I don’t get inspired.

PP: What do you think of Yul Brynner?
BD: I like his hairstyle.

PP: Do you believe that you’re being understood while you’re in France?
BD: No.

PP: Which American singers interests you most?
BD: Bessie Smith, Memphis Slim, Billie Holliday, Nancy Sinatra.
PP: Do you like folksingers?
BD: I like everybody.

Would the gentlemen of the Press who don’t know my songs abstain from asking questions about those songs.

PP: Are you aware of having been to school?
BD: No.

PP: Tomorrow, you will be 25 years old. Do you have a wish, even an impossible one?
BD: That allusion to my birthday is an insult... (pause)**. No, I take that back. I don’t know what I’m saying any more. I’m feeling sleepy...**

PP: Are you aware of your music becoming more and more commercial?
BD: I’ve not noticed that.

PP: Are you married?
BD: I’d be lying if I replied to that question.

PP: If the public abandoned you, what occupation would you take up?
BD: I’d like to become an excellent plumber.

PP: What song would you choose to end this press conference?
BD: Hello Dolly.

PP: Do you always live like a Beatnik?
BD: What do you mean by ‘beatnik’?
PP: Someone who has no desire for money or honors, who travels when he wants to.
BD: In that case, thanks for calling me a beatnik.

PP: What’s your puppet called?
BD: It’s called Finian, and neither Finian nor Bob Dylan know why they’re going to Paris.

PP: Were you a good pupil at school?

BD: No, very bad. I failed all my exams.

PP: Is there anything about which you are certain?
BD: I'm certain of the existence of ashtrays, of doorknobs, of window panes.

PP: What are you earning from your show at Olympia?
BD: Three hundred and fifty billion dollars.

And then the extra bits from *Ghost of Electricity* –

PP: Why are you here?
BD: I have to be here.

PP: Who are these cameramen who follow you everywhere?
BD: It's weird. When I go out, I never know where I'm gonna go, but they're always there.
PP: The cameraman who follows you everywhere, why isn't his hair as long as yours?
BD: That's his problem.

PP: Why are you so nice?
BD: Because I feel so good. I've just woken up.
PP: Why do you sing?
BD: Because I like to sing.
PP: Do you want to express something with your singing?
BD: No.

PP: Your friends say that your earlier songs are better than your latest, more commercial recordings.
BD: Who asked that question? (the man is pointed out to him) **Oh, but he's not one of my friends. You don't even know my friends!**

PP: You're often called a philosopher and a poet. Are you?
BD: I don't know.

PP: How would you define folk music?
BD: It's music filled with legend, with myth, with ghosts, with the Bible, with anything in fact.

PP: Who are your favorite singers?
BD: Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Billie Holiday and Nancy Sinatra (note difference from earlier version – JAB).
PP: What about Woody Guthrie?
BD: Yes, Woody Guthrie.

PP: What do you think about Antoine and Hugues Aufray?
BD: I know nothing about Antoine and hardly anything about Hugues Aufray.

PP: Do you like translations of your songs?
BD: I'm not interested – as long as they sell well.

PP: What do you think when you look in the mirror?
BD: I never look in mirrors.

PP: Which song will you open with tomorrow night? (note difference from earlier version – JAB).
BD: Hello Dolly.

PP: Are you taking these questions seriously?
BD: Very, very seriously.

PP: What did you feel when all your drug songs were banned by all the radio stations because they were taken as indirect invitations to take drugs?
BD: Banned? Who said so? I don't know.

PP: What interests you in life?
BD: Nothing.
PP: What makes you happy?
BD: Oh, a bowl of soup. Being kicked in the ribs by a friend.
PP: Are you happy?
BD: Yes. As an ashtray may be.

PP: What question would you like to be asked?
BD: Hello, Bob. How are you?

PP: Are you committed to any causes?
BD: Committed? Me? I don't belong to any movement. I've only got some ideas in my head and I tell them. I don't support anybody's cause. No revolution ever came about because of songs.

Before leaving with twenty close friends who help him to carry his puppet and the despair of the world, the nice young man revealed that he sleeps with one hand under his leg and the other under his left ear.

May 1966
Eat The Document Outtakes, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 575-577.

Transcript of several reels of *Eat The Document* footage which never quite made it to the final movie – quite obvious why – they hardly show Bob in a good light. Just picture Dylan, John Lennon (JL), Bobby Neuwirth (BN) and D. A. Pennebaker (DP) in the back of a limousine (driven by Tom [TM]) touring round London. Imagine the participants high on drugs – for Lennon, probably only cannabis, for Dylan, unquestionably something stronger.

FIRST REEL

BD: (Peering out of the limo window) **There's the mighty Thames. That's what held Hitler back, the mighty Thames. Winston Churchill said that. Tom, ain't that right?** (to the chauffeur) **Ain't that right, Tom? Tom, I think I'm gonna turn you into Tyrone Power.**

JL: Say that again, will you Bob?

BD: Tom, I think I'm gonna turn you into Ronald Coleman.

JL: That's better. That's very much better.

BD: Reginald Young. Peetie Wheatstraw. Or Sleepy John Estes, man. Or Robert Johnson. Go to medical school like J. Carroll Nash...

JL: Johnny Cash, or all the rest of them.

BD: I have Johnny Cash in my film. Are you gonna shit yourself when you see it. You won't believe it.

JL: Hey! John's gonna shit again!

BD: He doesn't know. You know what he looks like, right, Johnny Cash? Have you spent much time around him? He moves great. He moves like that. (makes descriptive gesture)**. You gotta cut that part of the film, man, 'cause I really like him** (to Pennebaker)**. He moves like all good people. Like prize fighters.** (smiles at camera) **Johnny!**

JL: Johnny! Big River, Big River! (makes gesture of approval)

DP: (Smiling at camera) That's for Johnny, too!

BD: Yeah, he's on film too. He's incredible.

JL: Quite a guy, huh?

BD: Quite a guy, John. Oh man, you shoulda been around last night, John. Today's a drag.

JL: Oh really, Bob?

BD: Haha! I wish I could talk English, man.

JL: Me too, Bobby.

BD: (Pointing to Lennon) **He can talk American.** (To Tom) **Hey, Tom, you've heard me talk in English, haven't you? But I can't never do it around John though because (behind back of hand) John's such a great actor, man, that...**

JL: ...you can't believe that it's me.

BD: Is this the mighty Thames, still, Tom? (To Lennon) **Remember when I played you those tapes? Do you remember what you said to me? I played you a song and you said... what's the name of your song publishing company?**

JL: Dick James.

BD: Naw, naw. Is that the name of it? That wasn't the name I heard.

JL: Northern Songs?

BD: Right, that was it. I said, 'What's *Northern Songs?*' And I was never told man. I had to go and find out.

JL: Didn't they tell you?

BD: No, man, they didn't tell me. Someone said, 'You wanna be on Northern Songs' and you laughed and Paul McCartney looked the other way and talked to Ringo...

JL: ...and Mick Jagger...

BD: ...blew shit from his nose...

JL: ...and Rob Roy leapt into the room with a big kilt on and said, 'Hey, Bobby, have you heard this one?'

BD: Haha! You haven't lived in Texas, man. I read in the paper that George Harrison spends a lot of time in the States. You've learned a lot from George.

JL: (In John Peel-style voice) Tell me about The Mamas & Pappas, Bob. I believe you're backing them bigly.

BD: I knew it would get to that. I knew it would get to that. Naw. You're just interested in the big chick, right? She's got hold of you, too. She's got a hold of everybody I know. Everybody asks me the same thing. you're terrible, man.

JL: Do you know Ralph Donner? He's another great one.

BD: No, I only know the lesser known ones.

JL: Barry McGuire's a great war hero.

BD: Barry McGuire? He's a good friend of yours, John, I understand.

JL: He met me through you, Bob, remember that. He's a great buddy, Sergeant Barry.

BD: Haha! Tell me about The Silkies.

JL: Naw. We've missed all the good 'uns.

BD: Tell me about this pain in my side.

JL: Why don't you take something?

BD: I've taken a few milligrams of Silkie once. Barry McGuire tells me he's a great friend of yours.

JL: Well, I hate to say this about Barry, Bobby, but I don't know him at all personally, but I did have a letter from his manager saying he was very close to you, being on the bosom of the current folk-a-rock-a-boom.

BD: Yes, yes.

JL: That's the first thing I did hear about Barry himself.

BD: But you've never really exchanged correspondence... (now talks to Pennebaker) **Oh, get those two lovers over there...** (and back to Lennon)... **You never did, as one of your friends would wish you, you never did meet the chap. Haha!**

REEL TWO

BD: (Looking very ill) **I wanna go back home. I wanna go back home, man, see a baseball game, all-night TV. I come from a land of paradise, man.**

JL: (Sarcastically) Sounds great.

BD: Well, I could make it sound so great that you wouldn't have the capacity to speak. Hey, I'm very sick, man. I'll be glad when this is over, 'cause I'm getting very sick here.

JL: With the tremors?

BD: Are you getting sick here? Is it pouring yet? Hey, that's a good shot, (to Pennebaker who's leaning out of the window and filming Bob back through it) **but why don't you bring it back in 'cause it's cold. Aw! How far are we from the hotel, Tom?**

TM: Five minutes.

BD: Oh, wow.

JL: Permission to land, Tom.

BD: Oh God, I don't wanna get sick here. What if I vomit into the camera? I've done just about everything else into that camera, man, I might just vomit into it.

DP: It'd make a nice ending, wouldn't it? Cooking With Dylan we'll call it.

BD: But I never throw up. So tell me John, how long have you had a partnership with Macy's?

JL: The Macy Brothers themselves, we've had a partnership of 13, 14 years I guess.

BD: And you're a new cat, a new youngster, from Canada, right?
JL: Canada, yes, rootin' tootin' Quebec, you know.
BD: Aw, I'm very sick. How far are we out of town?
TM: About ten minutes.
BD: Awww!
TM: Do you want to head back?
BD: Yeah! Hurry!
BN: In approximately fifteen seconds from now BBC2 going on the air, in approximately fifteen seconds from now, an interview with Mr Dylan... Mr Dylan, you must remember me from the Jamaicas, I went to school with Bobby Babwebba Babbabably Bawebbly.
BD: Aw, don't do it to me, man.
BN: All the soul brothers from the BBC will be there. The BBC good guys are at the airport. The BBC bad guys are waiting downtown for you when you get there.
(Dylan looks increasingly more and more unwell)
JL: Do you suffer from sore eyes, groovy forehead, or curly hair? Take Zimdon!
BD: Aw, no, man.
JL: Come, come, boy, it's only a film. Come, come, pull yourself together. Another few dollars, eh? That'll get your head up. Come on, come on, money, money!
BD: Haha! Huh! Where are you, Tom?
BN: We're in Sherwood forest, Rob. Friar Tuck.
BD: (Appearing as if about to vomit) **Please go back to the hotel.**
TM: I'm on the way back now.
BN: What's the altitude in here?
TM: Two thousand feet.

27 May 1966
Dylan On Stage, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1023-1024.

The final show of the 1966 World Tour at the Royal Albert Hall, London and Dylan had quite a few things to say to the audience from the stage. The following accounts show how it was all perceived by reporters from *Melody Maker* and *Disc & Music Echo* (Ray Coleman) respectively. These articles appeared the following week on June 4th.

DYLAN VIEW ON THE BIG BOO

In an amazing speech from the stage of London's Albert Hall Bob Dylan denied suggestions that some of his songs are "drug songs." He attempted to explain his changing music and indicated he wouldn't appear in Britain again. This all came out in his concert there last Friday.

After Dylan had been singing for some minutes accompanying himself on guitar and harmonica, he stopped and started talking to the huge hushed audience,

"I'm not going to play any more concerts in England," he announced. **"So I'd just like to say, this next song is what your English musical papers would call a drug song. I never have and never will write a drug song, I don't know how to. It's not a drug song, it's just vulgar."**

Dylan carried on with songs like "*Desolation Row*" and "*It's All Over Now, Baby Blue*". Then he was joined by the group for his electric sound songs.

Explained Dylan, "**I like all my old songs. It's just that things change all the time. Everybody knows I never said they were rubbish** (he pronounced the word in a Northern accent)**. That's not in my vocabulary. I wouldn't use the word rubbish if it was lying on the stage and I could pick it up. This music you are going to hear – if anyone has any suggestions on how it could be played better or how the words could be improved...? – we've been playing this music since me were ten years old. Folk music was just an interruption and was very useful. If you don't like it, that's fine."**

"This is not English music you are listening to. You have not really heard American music before. I want now to say what you're hearing is just songs, You're not hearing anything else but words and sounds. You can take it or leave it. If there's something you disagree with that's great I'm sick of people asking: 'What does it mean?' It means nothing." Here Dylan was interrupted by shouts, including "*Woody Guthrie would have turned in his grave*" and "*Rubbish*," but most of the audience wanted to hear Dylan out and shouted down the hecklers.

Melody Maker – June 4, 1966

UPROAR AT BOB DYLAN CONCERT

"This is my last visit here," said an angry Bob Dylan at his final British concert at London's Albert Hall on Friday. Certainly some of the audience didn't seem to care. They hooted, barracked and stalked out in protest then, after the interval Bob appeared with his electrifying backing group. Dylan's, excursion into rock and roll angered them. They wanted only the pure guitar accompanied folk-singing of the first half.

Dylan handled the aggressors extremely well. **"Oh you beautiful people,"** he said sending them up and referring to the songs **"Ah, it's all the same stuff..."**

"Go home," "Get the creep off," "Drop dead Dylan". Bob suffered some appalling treatment from some hecklers. But he battled on. And though the reception he got was unforgivable the rowdies had some justification.

We don't mind the wailing backing group, but must it be so loud. A lot of Dylan's talent lies in his words, and few could be heard above a caterwauling din, appallingly tasteless thudding drumming, and electrification gone mad.

The electrified performance was a shamble of noise – a vivid contrast from the first half which was great Dylan with guitar at his best singing with more clarity than ever, putting across beautiful songs like "Desolation Row" with a sensitivity sadly lacking from the band backed mess.

True, some of the second half had a bit of ferocious appeal, when he rang up with "*Like A Rolling Stone*" he sang the words "*You're gonna have to get used to it*" as if they had some hidden meaning. Lets hope he either changes his mind or rethinks his group function. Dylan is great but with that sort of row going on behind him he insults his own talents.

by Ray Coleman, *Disc & Music Echo*, 4 June 1966

7 May 1967
Michael Iachetta Interview, Woodstock, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 95-98

This article appeared in the May 8, 1967 issue of the *New York Daily News*.

After the motorcycle accident, Dylan secreted himself away in Woodstock. In May 1967, Michael Iachetta of the *Daily News* tracked him down to his out-of-the-way retreat and, after several attempts, managed to meet Dylan who, apparently recognizing Iachetta from an earlier interview (*New York Daily News*, October 20th 1963), granted him an audience. Although others had tried, this was the first reporter to gain an interview with Dylan since his accident. Iachetta describes Dylan as scarred, emotionally and physically, but, according to Albert Grossman, this was supposedly due to Iachetta being unable to recognize Dylan's "put-ons" and interpret the messages correctly.

WOODSTOCK, N. Y., May 7 (Special): For the first time since the motorcycle accident that almost cost him his life more than nine months ago, folk music's emotionally and physically scarred Bob Dylan spoke out yesterday about life since his crackup.

"What I've been doin' mostly is seein' only a few close friends, readin' little 'bout the outside world. Porin' over books by people you never heard of. Thinkin' about where I'm goin' and why am I runnin' and am I mixed up too much and what am I knowin' and what am I givin' and what am I takin'. And mainly what I've been doin' is workin' on gettin' better and makin' better music, which is what my life is all about."

In an exclusive interview – the first he has granted since his accident – Dylan flavored his words with bittersweet poetry about his record contract, his TV special, his book – and rumors that the accident had ended his career. He spoke at his mountain hideaway near his art colony about a hundred miles from New York.

He will be twenty-six on May 24. His occupation is song-writer, poet, singer and electric-guitar player. He is a hung-up middle-class kid who has put poetry on juke boxes with such songs as *Blowin' in the Wind* and *Like a Rolling Stone*.

His works have been recorded by artists ranging from Lawrence Whelk to the Byrds and he is credited with starting the folk-rock craze. His royalties have made him a millionaire, yet he lives like a hermit and hasn't cut a record since his accident.

Bobby goes almost into a trance as he described being thrown from the motorcycle: **"The back wheel locked, I think,"** he said. **"I lost control, swerving from left to right. Next thing I know I was in some place I never heard of – Middletown, I think – with my face cut up so I got some scars and my neck busted up pretty good. Just began movin' it around a month ago. New X-rays should be comin' through any day now. I know I won't be able to ride a motorcycle anymore."**

"But songs are in my head like they always are," said Dylan, **"And they're not goin' to get written down until some things are evened up. Not until some people come forth and make up for some of the things that have happened."**

As he talked, his slender fingers rubbed the new beard and moustache that make his face look strangely sensitive. A blue bandanna covered the top of his head – **"Some scars on my face from the accident,"** he explained offhandedly.

His words indicated that the record world has left him with a few scars too. **"Somethin' has got to be evened up is all I'm going to say,"** Dylan drawled. **"Meanwhile, whatever is happenin' in the world is happenin' just fine without me, and I'm going to just have to get better before I do any singin' on records, but the time is right for a new record."**

He says he has been working on two musical sounds, described as **"staccato"** and **"resoundin'." "The description belongs to my lead guitarist and one of my old drummers,"** says Dylan. **"I don't use words like that, but they do the job."**

He owes Columbia a record on a contract that expired not long ago. And he has been suspended for refusing to cut it. "But everything had been settled amicably and Bobby will be recording for us as soon as he is able to," said a Columbia spokesman.

Bobby doesn't seem to be in any hurry – even though MGM records has reportedly offered him a cool million to jump labels. **"What's money?"** said Dylan with the nonchalance of someone who has it. **"A man is a success if he gets up in the mornin' and gets to bed at night and in between he does what he wants to. What I want to do is make music."** He also wanted to make a film and write a book and accepted advances to do the job, but the ABC-TV special he was working on has been cancelled. **"The film is finished."** That's all Dylan will say. **"It's different."**

As for the book, **"word got round I had one when all I was doin' was writin' some things down,"** explained Bobby. **"Editors kept makin' – what do they call it? – revisions, and makin' it wrong and it just can't be printed until it's right."**

In Woodstock there is a story that Bobby's wife was following him at the time of the accident and rushed him to a doctor. **"I don't remember that,"** said Bobby, as always reluctant to talk about his personal life. **"Lots of things I don't remember about that day."**

Dylan stared for a long moment down at his gray cowboy boots. He was a gypsy-like figure in faded dungarees, lavender shirt with collar turned up to cover his neck and a purple-and-blue striped blazer. His sandy hair seemed longer and wilder than ever. He laughs at the stories that he has gone three-button Ivy and cuts his hair short, but he doesn't laugh at the cruel rumors that have made the rounds from hippie haven to California to the git-fiddle Mecca that is Gerde's Folk City in Greenwich Village.

The rumor mill had it that the accident had finished Bobby's career; that he was a vegetable; that he was so badly scarred he refused to come down from the top floor of his hideaway – speaking only to his friends and then only through an intercom.

Try to check the rumors in New York City and all Bobby's manager, Albert Grossman, will say is that Bobby broke his neck in a motorcycle accident. "He is still recovering," said Grossman, "and he is not seeing anybody." You are left with a clicking sound and a phone receiver in your hand. So you dial Columbia Records. "We don't know where Bobby is," says a spokesman. "Somewhere in Bearsville, we think, but you'll never find him. Why waste your time?"

Maybe it is because of the anxiety in Abe Zimmerman's voice when you call him person-to-person in Hibbing, Minn., and ask him about his son, Bobby Dylan. "Bobby's fine," says Abe, a prosperous appliance dealer whose oldest son preferred the name of a poet to the name he was

given at birth in Duluth. "Yes, I heard about the accident," says Abe, "but Bobby's been up since then. He went to the last Cassius Clay fight. He is fine, isn't he? What does the New York office say?"

The New York office says little. So the next thing you know you are driving upstate towards a town that will create a conspiracy of silence around the mysterious Mr Dylan. As the hundred miles roll away, you find yourself thinking about a line from a Dylan song – *Ballad of a Thin Man*. The line is **"Something is happening here, but you don't know what it is, do you Mr Jones?"** It bothers you, as it was intended to, and you find yourself remembering the first time you met Dylan.

Even then, he shied away from talking about himself. **"I'm writing about myself and that's the only way I can do it,"** he said, coming on like the original wandering troubadour. There was no mention that he has grown up as Bobby Zimmerman in the Jewish society whirl around Minneapolis—St Paul and that he had done the three-button bit for six months as a scholarship student at the University of Minnesota. He dropped out and begun hustling a buck in a coffee house called the Ten o'clock Scholar in Dinkeytown, a small business section on the edge of campus.

There is no explaining the coffee house kick, just as there is no explaining why he began running away from home when he was ten. The cops collared him nine hundred miles away. Before he was nineteen he had lived in Duluth, Minnesota; Gallup, New Mexico; Cheyenne, South Dakota; Phillipsburg, Kansas; and, finally, Hibbing.

Along the way, he taught himself to play the piano, the harmonica, the autoharp and the guitar. He knew that he liked to write poems, and the poems became songs that were in the air around him, and he just had to write them down before somebody else did. **"I'm tryin' to be like the medium at a seance,"** he explained. **"There's a mystery, magic, truth and the bible in great folk music. I can't hope to touch that, but I'm goin' to try."**

In Woodstock you run into vague answers about the whereabouts of Bob Dylan. You spend forty-eight hours talking to teenagers, local merchants and the cop on the beat. Woodstock is an artistic community and the people appreciate a man trying to do a job as best he knows how, especially when he promises not to reveal the location of Bobby's house. Finally someone lets slip the name of the man who sold the house to Dylan and you have something to work on.

After four hours of driving up narrow mountain trails, running from watch-dogs, getting stuck in the mud and winding up hopelessly lost, you get a straight answer and you are there, impressed by the brooding wealth of the mahogany-stained estate you see in front of you.

Dylan's black Cadillac limousine is in a garage off the end of the driveway and there is a miniature playground for Bobby's young son, Jesse Byron, you identify yourself and ask for Dylan. "Never heard of Dylan," a voice says. "There's nobody here but my wife and child and me," says the gent at the door. "Now will you get out of here."

You leave, but as you do another car swings in and out of the driveway. It turns out to be the house's previous owner showing the place to friends. "Is that the Dylan house?" you ask as your car blocks his on the narrow road. "Yes," he replies.

The next day it is snowing in May and you believe anything is possible, so you go back to the house and knock on the door until a figure stares out at you from behind the grating. Bobby is standing in front of you and you are so genuinely glad to see that he is all right that you blurt out: "It's great to see you're up and around and the rumors aren't true."

He looks at your face curiously, trying to place it, and then he remembers that long-ago interview in his manager's office. **"We can't just stand here talking,"** he says, inviting you in for coffee.

And then he talked about life since the accident. Thin, almost emaciated, his lips clutched a cigarette. At the end of the talk he was asked about a *News* photographer taking his picture. **"I'd rather not,"** he said. **"It's one thing facing a writer, but I have this hang-up about cameras now."**

Winter 1968
Hubert Saal Interview, Woodstock, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 833-836.

Dylan was interviewed by Hubert Saal, music editor of *Newsweek*, at his Woodstock home early in 1968. It appeared in the February 26th 1968 issue of *Newsweek* under the banner

Dylan is back

Saal was invited expressly by Grossman probably to heal the rift with *Newsweek* caused by the 1963 Svedberg article.

"I won't be giving any concerts for a while," declared Bob Dylan. **"I'm not compelled to do it now. I went around the world a couple of times. But I didn't have anything else to do then."** So the hunger of an adoring public, famished by Dylan's eighteen-month retirement after his near-fatal motorcycle accident in 1966, is feasting on his new record, *John Wesley Harding*.

It has broken all Dylan records, its sales already verging on half a million and the gold disc that it took Dylan's three previous albums a year to achieve. In a month it has leap-frogged up the Billboard hit parade to number two, eclipsing the Rolling Stones and challenging the front-running Beatles.

Each Dylan album mapped new directions, alienating or delighting old admirers, enlisting armies of fresh recruits. In *Another Side of Dylan* he turned deaf ears to the protest idiom to which he had contributed such classics as "*Blowin' in the Wind*" and "*The Times They Are A-Changin'*"' And then, when he exchanged his acoustical guitar for electric, used a rock beat and invented a form called folk rock – and such songs as "*Like a Rolling Stone*" the folk purists called him "traitor." **"It's just development,"** Dylan says. **"We're always changing. You use new imagination and you get a new look."**

John Wesley Harding is no exception. Dylan likes change so much he even added a g to the name of the legendary Texas desperado. A few people have suggested that Dylan was trying to make up for all the g's he's dropped while singing his songs but when asked he replied: **"No, that's just the way the name always sounded to me."**

The obvious change in the new album is Dylan's return to the acoustical guitar and his train-wail harmonica. **"I was always with the traditional song."** Dylan says. **"I just used electricity to wrap it up in. Probably I wasn't ready yet to make it simple. It's more complicated playing an electric guitar because you're five or ten feet away from the sound and you strain for things that you don't have to when the sound is right next to your body. Anyway it's the song itself that matters, not the sound of the song."**

The simplicity and brevity of most of the songs in the new album happily reverse the tangled, surrealistic prolixity that characterises such previous songs as "*Desolation Row*" and "*Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands*." The new songs are carefully crafted, the imagery vivid and direct, the language concise, the rhymes often consonantly sophisticated. But concision inspires its own enigmas, demanding that the listener fill in between the lines -and sometimes provide the ending to a narrative ballad "*I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine*" burns with fervent evangelism and "*All Along the Watchtower*" mixes the symbolic, the pedestrian and the mystic to present a vision of irresistible evil.

An unusual quality of the new album is its fervent morality. Three of the songs actually end preaching a moral. **"A song is moral just by being a song,"** Dylan comments. **"We're all moralists. We all believe the same things in the same places."** But Dylan's morality here is no longer concerned with specific causes, individual victims or, as in "*The Gates of Eden*" or "*It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding),*" with unrelieved pessimism. Rather it is more philosophical, insisting in "*The Wicked Messenger*" and "*I Pity the Poor Immigrant*" on a fundamentalist approach to good and evil.

The two love songs that end the album reveal a new sexual maturity in Dylan. In earlier love songs women were usually portrayed as selfish, fickle and even contemptible. But now he shows an adult and mutual tenderness. At the same time he gives the songs an amusing added dimension by slyly playing with love words that apply as easily to mother and son as to lovers. The simple, witty, lovely "*I'll Be Your Baby Tonight*" begins "*Close you eyes/Close the door/You don't have to worry any more/I'll be your baby tonight*" and ends "*Do not fear/Bring that bottle over here/I'll be your baby tonight.*"

In a rare interview, a slender smiling and bearded Bob Dylan, who wears octagonal-shaped rimless Ben Franklin glasses, expressed a surprising attitude toward his songs, which accounted in part for the obscurity surrounding so many of his lyrics. **"I only look at them musically,"** he said, in a soft, Mid-western drawl. **"I only look at them as things to sing. It's the music that the words are sung to that's important. I write the songs because I need something to sing."** He elaborated: **"it's the difference between the words on paper and the song. The song disappears into the air, the paper stays. They have little in common. A great poet, like Wallace Stevens, doesn't necessarily make a great singer. But a great singer always – like Billie Holiday – makes a great poet."**

Dylan appeared much more concerned with his performance of the songs themselves. **"I could have sung each of them better. I'm not exactly dissatisfied but I'm not about to brag about the performance. In writing songs I have one great trouble. I'm lazy. I wish I could but you're not going to find me sitting down at the piano every morning. Either; it comes or doesn't. Of course some songs, like "*Restless Farewell,*" I've written just to fill up an album. And there are songs in which I made up a whole verse just to get to another verse."**

He didn't do this in *John Wesley Harding*. **"It holds together better. I've always tried to get simple. I haven't always succeeded. But here I took more care in the writing. In Blonde on Blonde I wrote out all the songs in the studio The musicians played cards, I wrote out a song, we'd do it, they'd go back to their game and I'd write out another song."** He wasn't composing on the spot but merely writing down songs he had carried around in his head for some time.

Dylan prefers Nashville, where the new album was recorded, to New York. **"I've cut seven albums in New York. You have to put up with all that taxicab nonsense and that hi-city confusion which disables you a lot. It's always cold and you can't go outside when you want. You get a boxed-in feeling. And, though New York has top-quality people, musicians sure know how to play in Nashville."**

Dylan's dislike of being boxed in apparently accounts for his seclusion in Woodstock, New York. Since his recovery from the motorcycle accident he's made only one brief appearance – at a memorial concert for Woody Guthrie at Carnegie Hall, where he received a hero's ovation. Shying at personal questions, he would only say about the accident: **"I stared at the ceiling for a few months. But since I've often sat around staring at ceilings it didn't bother me much. I haven't been in retreat. I'm a country boy myself and you have to be let alone to really accomplish anything. The reason I wasn't recording was some confusion over the contract"**

(Columbia Records suspended Dylan and he was reportedly offered a million dollars by MGM to switch companies. He didn't. **"It was just some misunderstanding between the parties,"** he said.)

Dylan's current reluctance to give concerts has nothing to do with the accident from which he appears fully recovered. **"I have more responsibilities now,"** he says. They include a wife and at least one child. Asked how long he had been married, Dylan said: **"If you ask me or my wife we'd say eternity, but if you ask somebody else he'd probably say three or four years."** How many children does he have? **"Some,"** he replied.

He was more communicative about the book he's writing, which is not the long-delayed "*Tarantula*." **"You see,"** he said, **"that was an opportunity for me to write a book rather than a book I wanted to write. I just put down all these words and sent them off to my publishers and they'd send back the galleys, and I'd be so embarrassed at the nonsense I'd written I'd change the whole thing. And all the time they had a hundred thousand orders."** He shook his head in wonder. **"Why, that is an audience for lots of writers' dreams. The trouble with it. it had no story. I'd been reading all these trash books, works suffering from sex and excitement and foolish things which only happen in a man's mind."**

"I've discovered," Dylan continued, **"that there are many many ways to write a story. Sensationalism isn't the way. Now I do have a story, the way Charlie Chaplin would think of it. It's all in here,"** he said, clutching the sides of his head. He hoped that the new book could be ready by July. Publication of "*Tarantula*" is indefinitely postponed.

Dylan's innocent approach to writing is both touching and oddly persuasive. His way with words is indisputable, from the frequently effective poems on his record jacket to the songs themselves, so many wonderful songs that it's amazing that he is just twenty-six years old. What is encouraging is the evidence supplied by his new album. A few songs are weak. None of them can match the incandescence of "*Blowin' in the Wind*" or "*A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*" But the album displays Dylan the craftsman, the artist, who if he smacked no towering home runs, got a few extra base hits and got on base nearly every time. **"I used to think,"** he says, **"that myself and my songs were the same thing. But I don't believe that any more. There's myself and there's my song, which I hope is everybody's song."**

June/July 1968
John Cohen And Happy Traum Interview, Woodstock, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 389-408.

John Cohen (JC) and Happy Traum (HT) conducted three interviews at Woodstock during June and July 1968 and these were published in *Sing Out* in October that year. Apparently it was Dylan's suggestion to Traum for the interviews to help *Sing Out* over some major financial difficulties. Traum recruited Cohen, a painter and musician who lived in the Woodstock area. The interview did not go the way Traum had expected with Dylan showing a lack of commitment to anything outside of his immediate environment.

The film discussed at the beginning of the interview is, if you can't guess, *Eat The Document*.

CONVERSATIONS WITH BOB DYLAN

JC: I didn't realize how good that film was when I saw it last.

BD: You thought it was good?

JC: It wasn't finished – I liked it because of that. But I didn't see *Dont Look Back*.

BD: It's just as well. The difference between the two would be in the editing... the eye. Mr. Pennebaker's eye put together *Dont Look Back*, whereas someone else's eye put together this film which you saw.

JC: Wasn't one of the "eyes" involved yours?

BD: Not entirely. Don't forget, Mr. Pennebaker shot all the film, and Mr. Alk was under direction from him. The (edited) **cut was under the direction of, well... I was one of them. What we had to work with was not what you would conceive of if you were going shooting a film. What we were trying to do is to make a logical story out of this newsreel-type footage... to make a story which consisted of stars and starlets who were taking the roles of other people, just like a normal movie would do. We were trying to do the same thing with this footage. That's not what anyone else had in mind, but that is what myself and Mr. Alk had in mind. And we were very limited because the film was not shot by us, but by the eye, and we had come upon this decision to do this only after everything else failed. And in everything else failing, the film had been cut just to nothing. So we took it and tried to do it this way because it was a new method and it was new to us, and we were hoping to discover something. And we did. People might see it and say it's just a big mess. Well, it might seem like a mess, but it's not. It starts with a half hour of footage there, that is clean: the film is sloppy and it looks like a lot of cutting in it, thirty second cuts to ten second cuts. But what we tried to do was to construct a stage and an environment, taking it out and putting it together like a puzzle. And we did, that's the strange part about it. Now if we had the opportunity to re-shoot the camera under this procedure, we could really make a wonderful film.**

JC: I liked this quality of having things that would normally not be used, that would be discarded, suddenly put together in such a way...

BD: Well, we had to do that because it's all we had. The reason it didn't get seen was that the program (TV) **folded and by the time we handed it in, they had already a statewide search begun to confiscate the film, because it was the property of ABC. So we were a little pressured here and there. What you saw was a rough work print.**

JC: What I liked was that the trip had such wildness, such insanity, it looked to me like things could only get worse, they couldn't get better while you were on such a thing. As the film built up, everything seemed to contribute to that. The nature of the crowds, the nature of

the reporters... I don't know if it was the film, or if it was where we were sitting when we saw it, but... well I'm sure one person is capable of doing both things...

BD: The subject and the Director?

JC: ...or the editor.

BD: Well the editor and director were two different people.

JC: Let's say the subject and one of the editors was the same person.

BD: Well, you have a lot of major films where the subject himself might be the director. Marlon Brando. Charlie Chaplin. Frank Black.

JC: But the nature of the person in the film... maybe to you that wasn't so wild.

BD: I can imagine something a lot wilder... maybe not a on a singing tour, but as a film. On the screen, what do you say is wild, and what do you say when wildness turns into chaos? Cecil B. De Mille made *Samson and Delilah*... that's pretty wild.

JC: But that was a stage set... I had the feeling that your film was really happening. You didn't set up the reporters... well, that girl who maybe jumps out the window, and maybe doesn't... it's hard to draw the line where play leaves off.

BD: It's hard to do a tour, and in the after hours make a movie. What we were doing was to try to fulfill this contract, to make a television show, and the only time I had to do it was when I was on tour, because I was on tour all the time.

JC: I never saw you perform when you were touring with an electric band, except the last time I saw you which was at Newport, in 1965, when the public first became fully aware of what you'd been writing and thinking. But by the time this movie was shot in England, why you were really flying... your hands going all over, above the mouth harp... I got the feeling that you don't have to necessarily predetermine these things, that they grow by themselves. When reporters ask such questions, and audiences scream at nothing, it invites you to become something that you don't necessarily intend to be.

BD: That's true, but I know quite a few people who accept it as a challenge. I used to see people who'd take off their tie and dangle it over the first row, and it would be almost hypnotic. P.J. Proby used to do that, there are people who actually invite it, who actually enjoy being pulled, you know... it's something having to do with contact. It's very athletic in a way.

JC: I take that film as very different from the new record you made... it might be opposite sides of the same coin. I think it's great, that in the period of three years, you can be the same person who did both.

BD: Well, you can do anything if it's your job. When I was touring, it was my line of work, to go out there and deliver those songs. You must accept that in some way. There's very little you can do about it. The only other thing to do is not to do it. But you certainly can't tell what's going to happen when you go on the stage, because the audiences are so different. Years ago the audience used to be of one nature, but that's not true anymore.

JC: You talked of it in the past – that was your job. But is it necessarily now your job?

BD: It is in a way. I like to play music on the stage. I expect to be playing music endlessly. So this period of time now isn't important to me; I know I'm going to be performing again, it's just a matter of the right time. And I'll have different material – so there'll be a change there.

JC: I recall a conversation we had in 1962... I don't know if I was seeing something, or wishing something on you – but I had just come back from Kentucky and you showed me *Hard Rain*, at Gerde's or upstairs from the Gaslight...

BD: I believe at the time, you were wondering how it fit into music. How I was going to sing it.

JC: That was my initial reaction. That's really ancient history now because a whole aesthetic, a whole other approach has come into music since then, to make it very possible to sing that kind of song.

BD: Yes, that's right.

JC: Before then it wasn't so possible. The question I asked you on seeing this stream of words was, if you were going to write things like that, then why do you need Woody Guthrie? How about Rimbaud? And you didn't know Rimbaud... yet.

BD: No, not until a few years ago.

JC: Back then, you and Allen Ginsberg met.

BD: Al Aronowitz, a reporter from the *Saturday Evening Post*, introduced me to Allen Ginsberg and his friend Peter Orlovsky, above a bookstore on 8th Street, in the fall of '64 or '65. I'd heard his name for many years. At that time these two fellows had just gotten back from a trip to India. Their knapsacks were in the corner and they were cooking a dinner at the time. I saw him again at Washington Square, at a party...

JC: At that time, for you, was there a stronger leaning towards poetry, and the kind of thing that Allen had dealt with?... as opposed to what Woody had dealt with.

BD: Well, the language which they were writing, you could read off the paper, and somehow it would begin some kind of tune in your mind. I don't really know who it was, but you could see it was possible to do more than what... not more... somewhat different than what Woody and people like Aunt Molly Jackson and Jim Garland did. The subject matter of all their songs wasn't really accurate for me; I could see that they'd written thousands of songs, but it was all with the same heartfelt subject matter... whereas that subject matter did not exist then, and I knew it. There was a sort of semi-feeling of it existing, but as you looked around at the people, it didn't really exist the way it probably existed back then, there was no real movement, there was only organized movement. There wasn't any type of movement which was a day by day, livable movement. When that subject matter wasn't there any more for me, the only thing that was there was the style. The idea of this type of song which you can live with in some kind of way, which you don't feel embarrassed about twenty minutes after you've sung it; that type of song where you don't have to question yourself... where you're just wasting your time.

JC: I don't know which was the cart and which was the horse, but people were asking about your music (and Phil Ochs' and others), "Is this stuff poetry or is this song?"

BD: Yes, well you always have people asking questions.

JC: What I'm trying to get at is whether you were reading a lot then, books, literature? Were your thoughts outside of music?

BD: No, my mind was with the music. I tried to read, but I usually would lay the book down. I never have been a fast reader. My thoughts weren't about reading, no... they were just about that feeling that was in the air. I tried to somehow get a hold of that, and write that down, and using my musical training to sort of guide it by, and in the end, have something I could do for a living.

JC: Training!

BD: Yes, training. You have to have some. I can remember traveling through towns, and if somebody played the guitar, that's who you went to see. You didn't necessarily go to meet them, you just went necessarily to watch them, listen to them, and if possible, learn how to do something... whatever he was doing. And usually at that time it was quite a selfish type of thing. You could see the people, and if you knew you could do what they were doing, with just a little practice, and you were looking for something else, you could just move on. But when it was down at the bottom, everyone played the guitar, when you knew that they knew more than you, well, you just had to listen to everybody. It wasn't necessarily a song; It was technique and style, and tricks and all those combinations which go together – which I certainly spent a lot of hours just trying to do what other people have been doing. That's what I mean by training.

JC: It's hard for me, because this is an interview and can't be just a conversation... like the tape recorder is a third element... I can't just say to your face that you did something great, that I admire you...

BD: Well in my mind, let me tell you John, I can see a thousand people who I think are great, but I've given up mentioning any names anymore. Every time I tell somebody who I think is pretty good, they just shrug their shoulders... and so I now do the same thing. Take a fellow like Doc Watson, the fellow can play the guitar with such ability... just like water running. Now where do you place somebody like that in this current flow of music? Now he doesn't use any tricks. But that has to do with age, I imagine, like how long he lives.

JC: I think it's also got to do with the age he comes from, he doesn't come from yours or mine.

BD: No, but I'm a firm believer in the longer you live, the better you get.

JC: But Doc is different from you and me. I know people who hate your voice. They can't stand that sound, that kind of singing, that grating. The existence of your voice and people like you, like Roscoe Holcomb, it challenges their very existence. They can't conceive of that voice in the same breath as their own lives.

BD: Well my voice is one thing, but someone actually having hate for Roscoe Holcomb's voice, that beautiful high tenor, I can't see that. What's the difference between Roscoe Holcomb's voice and Bill Monroe's?

JC: I don't think Bill likes Roscoe's voice. Bill sings with such control. Roscoe's voice is so uncontrolled.

BD: Well Bill Monroe is most likely one of the best, But Roscoe does have a certain untamed sense of control which also makes him one of the best.

JC: I don't think Doc Watson's voice and your voice are compatible, it doesn't bother me.

BD: No, no... maybe some day, though.

JC: I'd like to talk about the material in the songs.

BD: All right.

JC: Well, I mean your music is fine, it's complete... but what I'm asking you about is the development of your thoughts... which could be called "words". That's why I was asking about poetry and literature. Where do these things come upon a person? Maybe nobody asks you that.

BD: No, nobody does, but... who said that, it wasn't Benjamin Franklin, it was somebody else. No, I think it was Benjamin Franklin. He said (I'm not quoting it right) **something like, "For a man to be –** (something or other) – **at ease, he must not tell all he knows, nor say all he sees." Whoever said that certainly I don't think was trying to cover up anything.**

JC: I once got a fortune cookie that said "Clear water hides nothing"... Three or four years ago, there was an interview with you in Playboy. One particular thought stuck with me. You said it was very important that *Barbara Allen* had a rose grow out of her head, and that a girl could become a swan.

BD: That's for all those people who say, "Why do you write all these songs about mystery and magic and Biblical intonations? Why do you do that? Folk music doesn't have any of that." There's no answer for a question like that, because the people who ask them are just wrong.

JC: They say folk music doesn't have this quality. Does rock and roll music have it?

BD: Well, I don't know what rock and roll music is supposed to represent. It isn't that defined as a music. Rock and roll is dance music, perhaps an extension of the blues forms. It's live music; nowadays they have these big speakers, and they play it so loud that it might seem live. But it's got rhythm... I mean if you're riding in your car, rock and roll stations playing, you can sort of get into that rhythm for three minutes – and you lose three minutes. It's all gone by and you don't have to think about anything. And it's got a nice place; in a way this place is not necessarily in every road you turn, it's just pleasant music.

JC: You're part of it aren't you?

BD: Well, music is part of me, yes.

JC: From what I saw in that film, you were really in it.

BD: I was in it because it's what I've always done. I was trying to make the two things go together when I was on those concerts. I played the first half acoustically, second half with a band, somehow thinking that it was going to be two kinds of music.

JC: So acoustic would mean "folk" and band would mean "rock and roll" at that moment?

BD: Yes, rock and roll is working music. You have to work at it. You just can't sit down in a chair and play rock and roll music. You can do that with a certain kind of blues music, you can sit down and play it... you may have to lean forward a little.

JC: Like a ballad, or one of your "dreams".

BD: Yes, you can think about it, you don't necessarily have to be in action to think about it. Rock and roll is hard to visualize unless you're actually doing it... Actually too, we're talking about something which is for the most part just a commercial item; it's like boats and brooms, it's like hardware, people sell it, so that's what we're talking about. In the other sense of the way which you'd think about it, it's impossible.

JC: But the kids who are getting into it today, they don't want to sell brooms.

BD: It's an interesting field...

(aside to daughter)

Hello, did you just get home? Well maybe you better ask mamma. How was school? You learn anything? Well that's good. "My shoes hurt right here." **Well, we'll see what we can do about it.**

JC: Could we talk about your new record *John Wesley Harding*?

BD: There were three sessions: September, October and December, so it's not even a year old. I know that the concepts are imbedded now, whereas before that record I was just trying to see all of which I could do, trying to structure this and that. Every record was more or less for impact. Why, I did one song on a whole side of an album! It could happen to anybody. One just doesn't think of those things though, when one sees that other things can be done. It was spontaneously thought out, all those seven record albums. It was generously done, the material was out there. Now, I like to think that I can do it, do it better, on my own terms, and I'll do whatever it is I can do. I used to slight it off all the time. I used to get a good phrase or a verse, and then have to carry it to write something off the top of the head and stick it in the middle, to lead this into that. Now as I hear all the old material that was done, I can see the whole thing. I can't see how to perfect it, but I can see what I've done. Now I can go from line to line whereas yesterday it was from thought to thought. Then of course, there are times you just pick up an instrument – something will come, like a tune or some kind of wild line will come into your head and you'll develop that. If it's a tune on a piano or guitar - you'll just uuuuuuhhhh (hum) **whatever it brings out in the voice, you'll write those words down. And they might not mean anything to you at all, and you just go on, and that will be what happens. Now I don't do that anymore. If I do it, I just keep it for myself. So I have a big line-up of songs which I'll never use. On the new record, it's more concise. Here I am not interested in taking up that much of anybody's time.**

JC: That's why I gave you Kafka's *Parables and Paradoxes*, because those stories really get to the heart of the matter, and yet you can never really decipher them.

BD: Yes, but the only parables that I know are the Biblical parables. I've seen others. Khalil Gibran perhaps... It has a funny aspect to it – you certainly wouldn't find it in the Bible – this type of soul. Now Mr. Kafka comes off a little closer to that. Gibran, the words are all mighty but the strength is turned into that of a contrary direction. There used to be this disc jockey, Rosko. I don't recall his last name. Sometimes at night, the radio would be on and Rosko would be reciting this poetry of Khalil Gibran. It was a radiant feeling, coming across it on the radio. His voice was that of the inner voice in the night.

JC: When did you read the Bible parables?

BD: I have always read the Bible, though not necessarily always the parables.

JC: I don't think you're the kind who goes to the hotel, where the Gideons leave a Bible, and you pick it up.

BD: Well, you never know.

JC: What about Blake, did you ever read...?

BD: I have tried. Same with Dante, and Rilke. I understand what's there, it's just that the connection sometimes does not connect... Blake did come up with some bold lines though.

JC: A feeling I got from watching the film – which I hadn't considered much before folk music and rock & roll got so mixed together – is about this personal thing of put-ons, as a personal relationship. Like with the press, they ask such idiotic questions that they are answered by put-ons.

BD: The only thing there, is that that becomes a game in itself. The only way to not get involved in that is not to do it, because it'll happen every time. It evens happens with the housewives who might be asked certain questions.

JC: It's become a way of imparting information. Like someone will come with an idea, a whole thesis, and then they'll ask, "Is this so?" and you might not have thought of it before, but you can crawl on top of it.

BD: It's this question and answer business. I can't see the importance of it. There's so many reporters now. That's an occupation in itself. You don't have to be any good at it at all. You get to go to fancy places. It's all on somebody else.

JC: Ridiculous questions get ridiculous answers, and the ridiculous response becomes the great moment.

BD: Yes, well you have to be able to do that now. I don't know who started that, but it happens to everybody.

JC: I wouldn't have mentioned it, but to me, you've moved away from it... gotten beyond it.

BD: I don't know if I've gotten beyond it. I just don't do it any more, because that's what you end up doing. You end up wondering what you're doing.

JC: Hey. In the film, was that John Lennon with you in the car, where you're holding your head? He was saying something funny, but it was more than that... it was thoughtful.

BD: He said "Money"...

JC: Do you see the Beatles when you go there or they come here? There seems to be a mutual respect between your musics – without one dominating the other.

BD: I see them here and there.

JC: I fear that many of the creative young musicians today may look back at themselves ten years from now and say "We were just under the tent of the Beatles." But you're not.

BD: Well, what they do... they work much more with the studio equipment, they take advantage of the new sound inventions of the past year or two. Whereas I don't know anything about it. I just do the songs, and sing them and that's all.

JC: Do you think they are more British or International?

BD: They're British I suppose, but you can't say they've carried on with their poetic legacy, whereas the Incredible String Band who wrote this *October Song*... that was quite good.

JC: As a finished thing – or did it reach you?

BD: As a finished song it's quite good.

JC: Is there much music now that you hear, that reaches you?

BD: Those old songs reach me. I don't hear them as often as I used to. But like this other week, I heard on the radio Buell Kazee and he reached me. There's a lot... Scrapper Blackwell, Leroy Carr, Jack Dupree, Lonnie Johnson, James Ferris, Jelly Roll Morton, Buddy Bolden, Ian and Sylvia, Benny Fergusen, Tom Rush, Charlie Pride, Porter Wagoner, The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem... Everything reaches me in one way or another.

JC: How do you view the music business?

BD: I don't exactly view it at all. Hearing it and doing it, It'll take part in that – but talking about it... there's not much I can contribute to it.

JC: I recall in Billboard, a full page ad of you with electric guitar like in the movie...

BD: Sure, I was doing that.

JC: I'm interested how you talk of it in the past tense, as if you don't know what's coming next.

BD: Well, I don't in a sense... But I've been toying with some ridiculous ideas – just so strange and foreign to me, as a month ago. Now some of the ideas – I'll tell you about them – after we shut off this tape recorder.

JC: I was pleased that you know the music of Dillard Chandler, and that you were familiar with some unaccompanied ballads on a New Lost City Ramblers record. Do you think you'll ever try to write like a ballad?

BD: Yes, I hope so. Tom Paxton just did one called *The Cardinal*, quite interesting... it's very clean... sings it unaccompanied. The thing about the ballad is that you have to be conscious of the width of it at all times, in order to write one. You could take a true story, write it up as a ballad, or you can write it up in three verses. The difference would be, what are you singing it for, what is it to be used for. The uses of a ballad have changed to such a degree. When they were singing years ago, it would be as entertainment... a fellow could sit down and sing a song for half an hour, and everybody could listen, and you could form opinions. You'd be waiting to see how it ended, what happened to this person or that person. It would be like going to a movie. But now we have movies, so why does someone want to sit around for a half hour listening to a ballad? Unless the story was of such a nature that you couldn't find it in a movie. And after you heard it, it would have to be good enough so that you could sing it again tomorrow night, and people would be listening to hear the story again. It's because they want to hear that story, not because they want to check out the singer's pants. Because they would have a conscious knowledge of how the story felt and they would be a part of that feeling... like they would want to feel it again, so to speak.

JC: It must be terrific to try to write within those dimensions.

BD: Well once you set it up in your mind, you don't have to think about it any more. If it wants to come, it will come.

JC: Take a song like *The Wicked Messenger*. Does that fit?

BD: In a sense, but the ballad form isn't there. Well the scope is there actually, but in a more compressed sense. The scope opens up, just by a few little tricks. I know why it opens up, but in a ballad in the true sense, it wouldn't open up that way. It does not reach the proportions I had intended for it.

JC: Have you ever written a ballad?

BD: I believe on my second record album, *Boots Of Spanish Leather*.

JC: Then most of the songs on *John Wesley Harding*, you don't consider as ballads.

BD: Well I do, but not in the traditional sense. I haven't fulfilled the balladeers job. A balladeer can sit down and sing three ballads for an hour and a half. See, on the album, you have to think about it after you hear it, that's what takes up the time, but with a ballad, you don't necessarily have to think about it after you hear it, it can all unfold on you. These melodies on the *John Wesley Harding* album lack this traditional sense of time. As with the third verse of the *Wicked Messenger*, which opens it up, and then the time schedule takes a jump and soon the song becomes wider. One realizes that when one hears it, but one might have to adapt to it. But we are not hearing anything that isn't there; anything we can imagine is really there. The same thing is true of the song *All Along The Watchtower*, which opens up in a slightly different way, in a stranger way, for here we have the cycle of events working in a rather reverse order.

JC: One suggested interpretation of *Dear Landlord* is that you wrote it to bring out the line "each one has his own special gift"...

BD: I don't know about that. These songs might lay around in your head for two or three years, and you're always writing about something previous. You learn to do that, so that the song would not tend to be a reaction, something contemporary would make it a reaction. I don't know what it seems to explain any more than anybody else. But you always have to consider that I would write the song for somebody else. He might say something, or behave in a certain manner, or come right out and offer information like that. And if it's striking enough, it might find an opening. And don't forget now John. I'll tell you another discovery I've made. When the songs are done by anybody on a record, on a strange level the songs are done for somebody, about somebody and to somebody. Usually that person is the somebody who is singing that song. Hear all the records that have ever been made and it kinda comes down to that after a while.

JC: Could you talk about where you were going when you first started out from home?

BD: As I think about it, it's confusing to me to think of how I reached whatever place this is. I tend not to wonder about it anyway. It's true, I have no goal so to speak. I don't have any more intentions than you do.

JC: I intend to do my work.

BD: Yes, me too, and to make the world interesting enough, in order to keep doing it. That's what has kept it up so far. I really can't do it if it's not interesting. My intention would be not to think about it, not to speak about it, or remember any of it that might tend to block it up somehow. I've discovered this from the past anyway. There was one thing I tried to do that wasn't a good idea for me. I tried to write another *Mr Tambourine Man*. It's the only song I tried to write "another one". But after enough going at it, it just began bothering me, so I dropped it. I don't do that anymore.

JC: A danger of such a position is that you can be accused of only living in the present. People will say you're just living for the minute – with no plan and no care for the past.

BD: I have more memories for the past than for the future. I wouldn't think about the future. I would only have expectations, and they'd all be very good. For the past I just have those memories. We were just talking of this "past" business the other night. Say this room is empty now, except with just myself. Now you enter the room, but you're bound to leave, and when you do, what's to guarantee that you've been in this room. But you were in this room, if I want to reconstruct it, sit here for the rest of the day... if I take enough notes while you are in the room, I could possibly sit here for a week, with you in the room... something like that anyway.

JC: It's elusive. Anyway, back to the thought of "each one has his own special gift".

BD: That would be... just a fact.

JC: But if everybody felt it, perhaps the American army wouldn't be so capable of killing, and Kennedy might not be killed – King might not be killed.

BD: But we're talking now about things that have always happened since the beginning of time, the specific name or deed isn't any different than that which has happened previous to this. Progress hasn't contributed anything but changing face... and changing situations of money, wealth... that's not progress really. Progress for disease – that's progress... but putting in a new highway through a backyard is getting rid of the old things.

JC: The real progress each person makes is not going outwards but going inwards. I have the feeling that a change has come over you... seem to have discovered that same idea.

BD: Well, I discover ideas here and there, but I can't put them into words.

JC: You mean, that by the time they are songs, they're said?

BD: Well, the songs are a funny thing. If I didn't have the recording contract and I didn't have to fulfill a certain amount of records, I don't really know if I'd write down another song as long as I lived. I'm just content enough to play just anything I know. But seeing as how I do have this contract, I figure my obligation is to fill it, not in just recording songs, but the best songs I can possibly record. Believe me, I look around. I don't care if I record my own songs, but I can't sometimes find enough songs to put on an album, so

then I've got to do it all with my songs. I didn't want to record this last album. I was going to do a whole album of other peoples songs, but I couldn't find enough. The song has to be of a certain quality for me to sing and put on a record. One aspect it would have to have is that it didn't repeat itself. I shy away from those songs which repeat phrases, bars and verses, bridges... so right there it leaves out about nine-tenths of all the contemporary material being written, and the folk songs are just about the only ones that don't... the narrative ones, or the ones with a chorus like *Ruben's Train*. I don't know, maybe then too I'm just too lazy to look hard enough.

JC: Do you consider that there's been a change of pace in your life over the past three years?

BD: "Change of pace" if you mean what I was doing before. I was touring for a couple of years. That's a fast pace, plus we were doing a whole show, no other acts. It's pretty straining to do a show like that, plus a lot of really unhealthy situations rise up. I was just going out there performing these songs. Everyone else was having a good time. Right now I don't think about it anymore. I did it, and I did it enough to know that there must be something else to do.

JC: In a way, you had the opportunity to move into it and move out of it at your own choice.

BD: It wasn't my own choice. I was more or less being pushed into it – pushed in and carried out.

Enter Happy Traum

HT: Has anyone picked up on your new approach – like on the album, clear songs and very personal, as opposed to the psychedelic sounds?

BD: I don't know.

HT: What do you know?

BD: What I do know is that I put myself out of the songs. I'm not in the songs anymore, I'm just there singing them, and I'm not personally connected with them. I write them all now at a different time than when I record them. It used to be, if I would sing, I'd get a verse and go on and wait for it to come out as the music was there, and sure enough, something would come out, but in the end, I would be deluded in those songs. Besides singing them, I'd be in there acting them out – just pulling them off. Now I have enough time to write the song and not think about being in it. Just write it for somebody else to sing, then do it – like an acetate. At the moment, people are singing a simpler song. It's possible in Nashville to do that.

JC: I heard *Blowin' In The Wind* played on the radio after the most recent assassination.

BD: By who?

JC: It was muzac style... music to console yourself by.

BD: Airplane style.

JC: Do you think you'll ever get a job playing for muzac? The best musicians do that work, Bob.

BD: Well I'd give it a try if they ask.

JC: No one calls you into the studio to "Lay down some music" as they say.

BD: Before I did the new album, I was waiting to meet someone who would figure out what they would want me to do. Does anybody want any songs written about anything? Could Bob be commissioned, by anybody? Nobody came up with anything, so I went ahead and did something else.

JC: For a while a number of years ago, the songs you were writing, and that others were writing along similar lines, were played a lot on popular radio. Today it's not completely disappeared, but it certainly is going in some other direction.

BD: You just about have to cut something tailor-made for the popular radio. You can't do it with just half a mind. You must be conscious of what you're involved in. I get overanxious when I hear myself on the radio, anyway. I don't mind the record album,

but it's the record company, my A&R man, Bob Johnston – he would pick out what's to be played on the radio.

HT: Did you ever make a song just to be a single?

BD: Yes I did. But it wasn't very amusing because it took me away from the album. The album commands a different sort of attention than a single does. Singles just pile up and pile up; they're only good for the present. The trend in the old days was that unless you had a hit single, you couldn't do very well with an album. And when you had that album, you just filled it up. But now albums are very important.

JC: You've tried movies and books...

BD: In both cases, in shallow water.

JC: In that book of photographs of you that was published, when I finished looking at it, I came away knowing not one bit more than when I started.

BD: Yes, well what can you know about anybody? Book or photographs, they don't tell you too much about a person.

HT: For years now, people have been analyzing and pulling apart your songs. People take lines out of context and use them to illustrate points, like on *Quinn The Eskimo*... I've heard some kids say that "Quinn is the bringer of drugs." Whatever you meant doesn't matter... the kids say "Dylan is really into this drug thing... when the drugs come, everybody is happy." This kind of thing is always happening with all of your songs.

BD: Well, that's not my concern.

JC: Many of the songs have set up conditions where people can read whatever they want into them.

HT: People pull them apart and analyze them.

BD: It's not everyone who does that – just a certain kind. People I come in contact with don't have any questions.

HT: Perhaps that's come back lately in the very spontaneous art, in the whole multi-media kind of thing. Response to impulses... you can't respond any other way.

JC: I think it's to anyone's favor that they can follow what's on their mind, what comes from within them, rather than getting swept up in all these other possibilities... which might be just a reaction against the analytic approach anyway. There is another way... someone might just follow his inner course... without being unaware of what is going on. Bob, how do you respond to multi-media?

BD: When you say multi-media, would that be like the clothes stores?

JC: Never having been to one, I'll say yes.

BD: I've never been to one either.

HT: It's also stage presentations where music, dance, lights and the rest are jumbled together, piled on the viewer, where all the senses are used.

JC: In that context of multi-media, where are you?

BD: Well I'm a very simple man. I take one, maybe two... too much just confuses me. I just can't master confusion. If I don't know what's happening and everyone who goes and tells me just says that they don't know what happened any more than I do, and they were there, then I'd say that I didn't know where we were.

HT: Do you feel the same way about the psychedelic sound on records?

BD: No, I don't.

HT: A lot of the music today is not only very loud and very fast, but it's structured in such a way that a lot of instruments are playing at once, with a lot of distortion.

BD: That's fine. A lot of people playing it.

HT: You seem to have made a conscious effort away from that on your last record.

BD: It was a conscious effort just to begin again. It wasn't a conscious effort to go in a certain direction, but rather like put up or shut up so-to-speak. So that's all.

JC: I see that picture of Muhammed Ali here. Do you know him?

BD: No, I've seen him perform a few times.

HT: Do you follow the fights?

BD: Not any more. When he came down to Bleeker Street to read his poetry, you would have wished you were there.

JC: He really made a point that lasted afterwards – beyond that someone got conked.

HT: Not being particularly interested in fighting, what impressed me is how he stayed true to himself – his own stand as a human being was more important to himself than the championship.

JC: Could you talk about some of the diverse elements which go into making up one of your songs, using a song from which you have some distance?

BD: Well, there's not much we could talk about – that's the strange aspect about the whole thing. There's nothing you can see. I wouldn't know where to begin.

JC: Take a song like *I Pity The Poor Immigrant*. There might have been a germ that started it.

BD: Yes, the first line.

JC: What experience might have triggered that? Like you kicked the cat who ran away, who said "Ouch!" which reminded you of an immigrant.

BD: To tell you the truth, I have no idea how it comes into my mind.

JC: You've said there was a person usually in it.

BD: Well, we're all in it. They're not any specific people... say, someone kicks the cat, and the cat writes a song about it. It might seem that way, during some of the songs, and in some of the poetry that's being passed around now-a-days. But it's not really that way.

JC: You said that often a song is written for a certain person.

BD: That's for a person, not about him. You know, you might sometimes be with someone who's got no song to sing, and I believe you can help someone out, that's the extent of it really.

JC: Well, *Quinn The Eskimo* wasn't that way.

BD: You see, it's all grown so serious, the writing-song business. It's not that serious. The songs don't painfully come out. They come out in a trick or two, or from something you might overhear. I'm just like any other songwriter, you pick up the things that are given to you. *Quinn The Eskimo*, I can't remember how that came about. I know the phrase came about, I believe someone was just talking about *Quinn, the Eskimo*.

JC: Someone told me there was once a movie with Anthony Quinn playing an Eskimo. Did you know of that?

BD: I didn't see the movie.

JC: But that could have triggered it.

BD: Of course.

JC: This makes a lot of sense, in the sense that you can travel down a road, and see two signs advertising separate things, but where two words come together, it will make a new meaning which will trigger off something.

BD: Well, what the songwriter does, is just connect the ends. The ends that he sees are the ones that are given to him and he connects them.

HT: It seems that people are bombarded all the time with random thoughts and outside impulses and it takes the songwriter to pick something out and create a song out of them.

BD: It's like this painter who lives around here – he paints the area in a radius of twenty miles, he paints bright strong pictures. He might take a barn from twenty miles away, and hook it up with a brook right next door, then with a car ten miles away, and with the sky on some certain day. A person passing by will be painted alongside someone ten miles away. And in the end he'll have this composite picture of something which you can't say exists in his mind. It's not that he started off willfully painting this picture from all his experience... That's more or less what I do.

JC: Which and where is *Highway 61*?

BD: I knew at one time, but at this time it seems so far away I wouldn't even attempt it. It's out there, it's a dividing line.

JC: Is it a physical *Highway 61*?

BD: Oh yes, it goes from where I used to live... I used to live related to that highway. It ran right through my home town in Minnesota. I traveled it for a long period of time actually. It goes down the middle of the country, sort of southwest.

JC: I think there is an old blues about *Highway 61*.

BD: Same highway, lot of famous people came off that highway.

JC: Can you keep contact with the young audiences who perhaps buy most of your records?

BD: That's a vague notion, that one must keep contact with a certain illusion of people which are sort of indefinable. The most you can do is satisfy yourself. If you satisfy yourself then you don't have to worry about remembering anything. If you don't satisfy yourself, and you don't know why you're doing what you do, you begin to lose contact. If you're doing it for them instead of you, you're likely not in contact with them. You can't pretend you're in contact with something you're not. I don't really know who I'm in contact with, but I don't think it's important.

JC: Well, on the airplanes, they have these seven channels of stereo, and your music is marked as "for the kids" rather than anywhere else, and it sort of bothered me. Do you have a chance to meet the kids?

BD: I always like to meet the kids.

JC: Do you get a chance?

BD: Not so much when I'm touring as when I'm not touring. When you're touring, you don't get a chance to meet anybody. I've just been meeting people again in the last few years.

JC: It's a strange phenomenon, for you reach them the most when you are on tour yet you can't reach them at all.

BD: Well yes, but the next time I go out, it's going to be a little bit more understandable. Next time out, my hopes are to play the music in a different way.

HT: How can you get around the problems you encountered last time?

BD: I'm not really aware of those problems. I know they exist because it was very straining, and that's not the way work should be. But it's a situation that's pretty much all over... the screaming. Even some musician like Jimi Hendrix gets people seeing him who aren't coming there to scream – they're coming to hear him.

HT: Do you see any way you can approach your music in a public way, that would give a different perspective to an audience?

BD: Yes. Just playing the songs. See, the last time we went out, we made too much of a production of the songs. They were all longer, they were all my own songs, not too much thought had gone into the program, it just evolved itself from when I was playing single.

JC: And the film we've been discussing, is that a fair summary of that kind of tour?

BD: Yes it was. I hope people get a chance to see that film.

JC: Why do you think your music appeals to American Indians?

BD: I would hope that it appeals to everybody.

JC: I know suburban people can't stand it.

BD: Well, I wish there was more I could do about that.

JC: We just heard your record being played at an elegant store in New York City, as the background for people shopping.

HT: Pete Seeger told me the *John Wesley Harding* album is great to skate to. He said some records are good to skate to and some aren't, and that's a good one.

BD: I'm awfully glad he feels that way about it.

JC: What is your relationship to student groups, or black militants, like the kids at Columbia or at Berkeley?

BD: If I met them at all, I would meet them individually; I have no special relationship to any group.

JC: Do you follow these events, even from a distance, like reading a newspaper?

BD: Just like anyone else. I know just as much about it as the lady across the street does, and she probably knows quite a bit. Just reading the papers, talking to the neighbors, and so forth.

JC: These groups feel more about you than they do about that lady next door.

BD: I can assure you I feel the same thing. There are people who are involved in it and people who are not. You see, to be involved, you just about have to be there, I couldn't think about it any other way.

JC: Someone like Pete Seeger, who is different from all of us in this room, he reaches out.

BD: But how much of a part of it is he?

HT: Do you foresee a time when you're going to have to take some kind of a position?

BD: No.

HT: You don't think that events will ever reach you?

BD: It's not that events won't reach me, it's more a case of what I, myself would reach for. The decisions I would have to make are my own decisions, just like anyone else has to make his own. It doesn't necessarily mean that any position must be taken.

JC: Although I asked it, this is not really the kind of question I'm really concerned with. After all, if someone asked me, I could only say I do what I can, I sing my own music, and if they like to hear it, well, fine.

BD: Yes, but I don't know... What was the question again? You must define it better.

HT: I think that every day we get closer to having to make a choice.

BD: How so?

HT: I think that events of the world are getting closer to us, they're as close as the nearest ghetto.

BD: Where's the nearest ghetto?

HT: Maybe down the block. Events are moving on a mass scale.

BD: What events?

HT: War, racial problems, violence in the streets.

JC: Here's a funny aspect; we're talking like this here, but in a strange way, Bob has gone further than you or I in getting into such places. I just have heard from Izzy Young that the songs they were singing at Resurrection City were *Blowin' In The Wind* and *The Times They Are Changin'*. So in a sense by maintaining his own individual position, Bob and his songs are in the ghetto, and the people there are singing them – to them they mean action.

HT: Well, the kids at Columbia University are taking a particular stand on what they see as the existing evils. They're trying to get their own say in the world, and in a way trying to overcome the people ruling them, and there are powerful people who are running the show. They can be called the establishment, and they are the same people who make wars, that build the missiles, that manufacture the instruments of death.

BD: Well, that's just the way the world is going.

HT: The students are trying to make it go another way.

BD: Well, I'm for the students of course, they're going to be taking over the world. The people who they're fighting are old people, the old ideas. They don't have to fight, they can sit back and wait.

HT: The old ideas have the guns, though.

JC: Perhaps the challenge is to make sure that the young minds growing up remain open enough so that they don't become the establishment that they are fighting.

BD: You read about these rebels in the cartoons, people who were rebels in the twenties, in the thirties, and they have children who are rebels, and they forget that they were rebels. Do you think that those who are rioting today will somehow have to hold their kids back from doing the same thing.

JC: Are your day-to-day contacts among the artists, crusaders, businessmen or lumberjacks?

BD: Among the artists and lumberjacks.

JC: Crusaders?

BD: Well, you mean the people who are going from here to there, the men in long brown robes and little ivy twines on their head? I know quite a few crusaders but don't have much contact with them.

JC: How about leaders of the student groups? Did you know Malcolm X, or the kids from SNCC?

BD: I used to know some of them.

JC: Social crusaders, someone like Norman Mailer.

BD: No.

JC: What about businessmen?

BD: I get a lot of visitors and see a lot of people, and who's a businessman? I'm sure a whole lot of businessmen have passed by the past few hours, but my recollection really isn't that brilliant.

JC: Does your management serve as a buffer in translating your artistic works into business?

BD: I'm just very thankful that my management is there to serve what purpose a management serves. Every artist must have one these days.

JC: Would you talk of any of the positive things that drugs have to offer, how they might have affected your work?

BD: I wouldn't think they have anything to offer. I'm speaking about drugs in the everyday sense of the word. From my own experience they would have nothing positive to offer, but I'm not speaking for anyone else. Someone else might see them offering a great deal.

JC: But in the way of insights or new combinations, it never affected you that way?

BD: No, you get those same insights over a period of time anyway.

JC: For a while you were working on a book, they gave it a name *Tarantula*. Have you tried any other writing since then, or did you learn anything from the experience of trying?

BD: Yes, I do have a book in me, it'll be out sometime. MacMillan will publish it.

JC: Did you learn from the one you did reject?

BD: I learned not to do a book like that. That book was the kind of thing where the contract comes in before the book is written, so you have to fulfill the contract.

JC: In thinking over this interview thus far, it seems like that has happened to you several times over the recent years, not necessarily of your choosing.

BD: Yes, that's true. But it happens to other people and they come through. Dostoevsky did it, he had a weekly number of words to get in. I understand Frederick Murray does it, and John Updike must... For someone else it might be exactly what they always had wished.

JC: In trying to write it, was it a difficulty of structure or concept?

BD: No, there was no difficulty in writing it at all. It just wasn't a book. It didn't have that certain quality which now I think a book should have. It didn't have any structure at all, it was just one flow. It flowed for ninety pages.

JC: I'm thinking of a parallel. You know some of these old crazy talking blues? They go on where just the last phrase of a sentence connects up to the next sentence, but the two thoughts aren't related. "Slipping up and down the mantle piece, feet in a bucket of grease, hunting matches, etc." Did it go that way?

BD: More or less. They were short little lines, nothing within a big framework. I couldn't even conceive of doing anything within a big framework at that time. I was doing something else.

HT: Do you think future writings will use the poetic form or the novel?

BD: I think I will have everything in it.

JC: Listening to the car radio, I heard you have a song on the country music stations, *I'll Be Your Baby Tonight*. I can't remember the singer's name, but I understand that Burl Ives has also recorded it.

BD: A lot of people recorded them, they always do a good job.

JC: When did you first hear Burl Ives?

BD: I first heard Burl Ives when I was knee-high to a grasshopper.

JC: Was that folk music to you when you first heard it?

BD: Yes, I guess everybody's heard those old Burl Ives records on Decca, with a picture of him in a striped T-shirt, holding a guitar up to his ear, just wailing.

JC: Did you know that his first recordings were for Moe Asch (of Folkways Records)? Alan Lomax had brought him in. Who made the first recordings you are on?

BD: I recorded with Big Joe Williams.

JC: Where did this Blind Boy Grunt thing come in?

BD: Someone told me to come down 'cause they were doing some kind of an album. So I was there and singing this song, and it only had a couple of verses and that's all, so someone in the control booth said, "Do some more." I said well, there is no more, I can't sing no more. The fellow says "If you can't sing, GRUNT." So I said "Grunt?" Then someone else sitting at a desk to my left says, "What name shall I put down on this record?" and I said "Grunt." She said "Just Grunt?" Then the fellow in the control booth said "Grunt." Somebody came in the door then and said "Was that Blind Boy Grunt?" and the lady at the desk said "Yes it was".

JC: Was this Moe Asch and Marion Distler?

BD: It could have been.

JC: My last question is really a rehash of one aspect we've already discussed; at the moment, your songs aren't as socially or politically applicable as they were earlier.

BD: As they were earlier? Could it be that they are just as social and political, only that no one cares to... let's start with the question again. (JC repeats question) **Probably that is because no one cares to see it the way I'm seeing it now, whereas before, I saw it the way they saw it.**

HT: You hear a lot about the word "engaged" artists. Painters, film makers, actors, they're actively involved in current events, through their art.

BD: Well, even Michelangelo though...

HT: Many artists feel that at this particular time in history, they can't just do their thing without regarding the larger scale around them.

BD: The thing is, if you can get the scales around you in whatever you create, that's nice. If you physically have to go out there and experience it time and time again, you're talking about something else.

HT: Probably the most pressing thing going on in a political sense, is the war. Now I'm not saying any artist or group of artists can change the course of the war, but they still feel it their responsibility to say something.

BD: I know some very good artists who are for the war.

HT: Well I'm just talking about the ones who are against it.

BD: That's like what I'm talking about; it's for or against the war. That really doesn't exist. It's not for or against the war. I'm speaking of a certain painter, and he's all for the war. He's just about ready to go over there himself. And I can comprehend him.

HT: Why can't you argue with him?

BD: I can see what goes into his paintings, and why should I?

HT: I don't understand how that relates to whether a position should be taken.

BD: Well, there's nothing for us to talk about really.

JC: Someone just told me that the poet and artist William Blake harboured Tom Paine when it was dangerous to do so. Yet Blake's artistic production was mystical and introspective.

HT: Well, he separated his work from his other activity. My feeling is that with a person who is for the war and ready to go over there, I don't think it would be possible for you and him to share the same basic values.

BD: I've known him for a long time, he's a gentleman and I admire him, he's a friend of mine. People just have their views. Anyway, how do you know I'm not, as you say, for the war?

JC: Is this comparable? I was working on a fireplace with an old local stone mason last summer, while running off to sing at the New Politics Convention. When I returned I was chopping rocks with him, and he says, "All the trouble today is caused by people like Martin Luther King." Now I respect that man, not for his comments on Dr. King, but for his work with stone, his outlook on his craft, and on work and life, in the terms he sees it. It is a dilemma.

HT: I think it is the easy way out, to say that. You have to feel strongly about your own ideas, even if you can respect someone else for their ideas. (to Bob) I don't feel there is that much difference between your work now and your earlier work. I can see a continuity of ideas, although they're not politically as black and white as they once were. *Masters Of War* was a pretty black and white song. It wasn't too equivocal. You took a stand.

BD: That was an easy thing to do. There were thousands and thousands of people just wanting that song, so I wrote it up. What I'm doing now isn't more difficult, but I no longer have the capacity to feed this voice which is needing all these songs. I know the force exists but my insight has turned into something else. I might meet one person now, and the same thing can happen between that one person (and myself) that used to happen between thousands.

JC: This leads right to the last statement on my interview list: On your latest album, the focus has become more on the individual, axioms and ideas about living, rather than about society's doings or indictments of groups of people. In other words, it's more of how one individual is to act.

BD: Yes, in a way... in a way. I would imagine that's just the way we grow.

March 1969
Hubert Saal Interview, Woodstock, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 837-838.

Another Woodstock interview by Saal. This article was published in Newsweek on April 4th 1968. under the banner –

Dylan's Country Pie

> Raspberry, strawberry, lemon and lime,
> What do I care?
> Blueberry, apple, cherry, pumpkin and plum,
> Call me for dinner, honey, I'll be there.

These lines from "Country Pie" one of the ten songs on Bob Dylan's new Columbia album, *Nashville Skyline*, are a kind of declaration of independence, just as the song itself, with its country lyrics and jaunty Nashville sound, illustrates the character of the new record. When Dylan talks of eating pies, all kinds, he means writing songs, all kinds. And when he goes on in the song to say "*Ain't runnin' any race*" he seems to be rejecting the musical direction his many admirers have chosen for him in the past or would choose for him in the future.

Like almost every Dylan album, *Nashville Skyline* is full of surprises, perhaps even more than *Another Side of Bob Dylan* in 1964, in which he half turned away from topical protests like "*Blowin' in the Wind,*" or the shock of 1965's *Bringing It All Back Home*, when he fused folk and rock and electrified both his instruments and his audience, or last year's *John Wesley Harding*, in which Dylan switched to a series of narrative ballads, simple, mournful and mystical.

This new album is country Dylan, a collection of unaffected and highly tuneful love songs, riding comfortably cushioned on the Nashville sound, which sometimes, as in "*To Be Alone With You*" or "*One More Night,*" is pure Country and Western, but which for the most part is just a relaxed get-together of expert musicians who seem to know each other's – and Dylan's – moves as if they were playing at the Grand Ole Opry.

And just to make his point clear, Dylan starts the album off in a duet with the great country singer Johnny Cash, singing an old Dylan song called "*Girl From The North Country.*" The blend of Dylan's light voice and Cash's melodious baritone is as rough in texture and as unassuming as if they happened to meet on the street and burst into song. As a matter of fact, they almost did. When Dylan was asked how this duet with Cash came about, his first reply was. **"He happened to be in Nashville at the time."** His follow-up was. **"It's a great privilege to sing with Johnny Cash."**

The great charm of the album is in the variety of pretty songs and the ways Dylan, both as composer and performer, has found to exploit subtle differences on a deliberately limited emotional and verbal scale. In the oddly syncopated "*Lay Lady Lay,*" in the mocking musical figures of the plaintive "*Tell Me That It Isn't True*" and in the bluesy "*Tonight I'll Be Staying Here With You*" each melody is distinct and distinctive, the rhythms varied and complex, the music delicately and expressively colored. "*Peggy Day*" is almost a pastiche of the Thirties – its rhythms recall "swing" and Dylan sings with the kind of light-hearted showmanship that used to come from college bandstands. And if in the songs the words are plain and direct, they do

not lack cunning: "*Love to spend the night with Peggy Day*" and, later, "*Love to spend the day with Peggy Night*."

Bob Dylan is still staying pretty much out of public sight in Woodstock, New York, although he confesses that plans for public appearances are afoot. He expects to appear on Johnny Cash's television show this summer: **"Fair is fair,"** says Dylan. In his diffident way, he is apparently pleased with his new album. **"These are the type of songs that I always felt like writing when I've been alone to do so."** he says. **"The songs reflect more of the inner me than the songs of the past. They're more to my base than, say *John Wesley Harding*. There I felt everyone expected me to be a poet so that's what I tried to be. But the smallest line in this new album means more to me than some of the songs on any of the previous albums I've made."**

The base that Dylan refers to is the musicians and the music he knew before he came to New York. **"The people who shaped my style were performers like Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Hank Thompson."** He sank back on his couch recalling the earlier years, out of which came "*Blowin' in the Wind,*" "*A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*" and "*The Times They Are A-Changin'*." **"Those songs were all written in the New York atmosphere. I'd never have written any of them – or sung them the way I did – if I hadn't been sitting around listening to performers in New York cafes and the talk in all the dingy parlors. When I got to New York it was obvious that something was going on – folk music – and I did my best to learn and play it. I was just there at the right time with pen in hand. I suppose there was some ambition in what I did. But I tried to make the songs genuine."**

Among the things that Dylan was willing to say pleased him on the new record were the venturesomeness of the music, the extra and unusual guitar chording, the growing melodic nature of his songs. **"I admire the spirit to the music,"** he says. **"It's got a good spirit."** Good? **"Yes, like a good door, a good house, a good car, a good road, a good girl. I feel like writing a whole lot more of them too. "**

9 August 1969
Ray Connolly Interview, Woodstock, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 103-104.

Connolly, an English reporter, traveled to Woodstock shortly before the Isle of Wight festival to conduct this interview which was printed in the *London Evening Standard* on August 16 1969.

DYLAN'S TICKET TO RIDE

It is the time for the rekindling of what we loosely describe as the legends of contemporary music. At the beginning of this month, the biggest legend of them all, Elvis Presley, re-emerged in a place as unlikely as the International Hotel, Las Vegas, and at the end of the month it will be the turn of Bob Dylan in an even more unlikely place – the Isle of Wight. This is Dylan's first appearance in Britain for over three years, and his biggest engagement since he retreated into the life of a semi-recluse following his motorcycle accident, and he's working hard at the moment rehearsing for his re-entry into the public spotlight.

I spoke to him this week at his Woodstock, New York, home, a large estate in the mountains just to the West of the Hudson River. He's been living up there in comparative seclusion with just his wife and family (which increases at regular yearly intervals) since shortly before his accident in 1966.

"I don't really live such a secluded life as they'd have you believe," he drones, and one is immediately brought up short by his obvious willingness, no – anxiety, to be friendly. **"I'm just living a normal happy life like any other guy."**

The apparent bonhomie of the man is indeed a shock. Last time he visited Britain he avoided the Press like they had the bubonic plague, and since his semi-incarceration, he's hardly been the most gregarious of persons. But now he's looking forward to his appearance at the Isle of Wight Festival of Music on August 31 and he's about as benign and friendly as anyone can remember.

"I'm very anxious to get back on the stage. Singing and playing my music is just what I like to do. When I come back I'll be with the Band, of course, but I'll be doing some of those old songs with just the guitar and harmonica, too. My range of songs should be much bigger this time than on my last tour. Really I hope to be able to sing just whatever the people want to hear, including something from my last album. I think I like that the best of all I've done.

"The reason I started off playing with just that acoustical sound was an economic one. Between about 1958 and 1963 it wasn't possible for a big rock band to make a living because they went out of fashion. But when the Beatles came along they opened it all up and made it respectable again. It's economic again too, and I'll have the Band to play with me.

"People say I'm a poet and I'd sure like to be one. I think I could write a poem or two if I wanted to. But when I do songs I usually fit the words around the music, and it's the music which determines the words. I like to be considered a poet, but I think it's more flattering than truthful."

Staying with Dylan on the Isle of Wight will be his wife and probably the older two of their four children. **"I don't really want to have them in any publicity until they get old enough to play**

with me. Then when they're older maybe we'll have the Dylan family playing and singing together on stage."

About the moody introverted Dylan image he had this to say: **"When I first started singing an awful lot of people were singing those audience-type songs and I went along with this. But as time went on I got back to doing what I would have been doing if I hadn't been successful. The reason I looked so miserable in all the pictures was because when I asked the photographers how to look, they'd always say to me: "Don't smile," So I didn't."**

"The accident I had still bothers me a bit. My bones ache in the cold weather, or when it gets too humid. But in many ways it was good for me. It really slowed me down. Touring had been such a pace to keep up. And I was getting into a rut."

The signing of Dylan for the Festival is a considerable coup for the organizers, Ron and Ray Foulk who are confidently expecting an audience turn-out of well over 100,000 at the 100-acre Woodside Bay site, near Ryde.

A village of tents and marquees is being erected for accomodation purposes and British Railways will be running special trains and ferries.

Among the other acts at the Festival, now planned to run for four days, will be Richie Havens, Tom Paxton, the Pretty Things, The Who, Joe Cocker, Julie Felix, the Moody Blues, the Nice, the Bonzo Dog Band, Election and the Paris cast of Hair.

9 August 1969
Don Short Interview, Woodstock, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 99-101.

Short, an English reporter on the staff of the *Daily Mirror*, traveled to Woodstock shortly before the Isle of Wight festival to conduct this interview which was printed in the *Melody Maker* on August 23 1969.

The second life of Bob Dylan is about to begin. The legend is to live again. But can he change the pattern of folk history as he succeeded in doing in the years 1961 – 1966?

That question, and all the curiosity, intrigue and compassion Dylan has aroused among fans and sceptics alike through the years, will be dissolved at the end of this month. For it is then that Dylan has chosen to emerge from the green-clad obscurity of his countryside lodge and sail to England to appear at the Isle of Wight festival.

It may not seem a particularly significant venue for the great Dylan to choose as his comeback platform; but it is ideally Dylan if one takes into account his unpredictability. And as Dylan says, **"That's a little island of yours I always wanted to go to. It seems okay by me."**

It's okay by Julie Felix, Ritchie Havens, The Who, Joe Cocker, Marsha Hunt, the Moody Blues and Family who appear on the festival bill, too.

Dylan talked to me in New York as he was preparing to leave; it was his first interview since he survived a horrific car crash which halted his career three years ago.

Until then his music, poetry and philosophy had gained tremendous influence. **"Not so much here at home, but in England and various points abroad my music did well,"** concedes Dylan in modest strain today.

Nevertheless, his influence directly inspired many other artists and broadened the musical attitude of fans, tired of mundane pop and through Dylan found a new language of communication.

Today the world has gone folk and it's precisely at this moment that Dylan, the original master from Minnesota, returns.

What of the others – what of Donovan I ask Dylan? Did he consider Donovan who superseded him an imitator ?

Says Dylan cautiously: **"No, I wouldn't say that. He has developed his own style and his own kind of feel. Sometimes his lyrics get a bit corny and the arrangements gather a bit of fuzz, but I don't know of anyone who is doing what he is doing today."**

Dylan, although in hibernation all this time, has obviously kept his finger on the pulse; for he talks of The Cream, too, and the headway they were making and their surprising decision to split. **"Just when they were goin' big as a group in America,"** he said. **"That's a shame..."**

Just how has Dylan been spending his lost three years? He has been writing new music, "reams of it and with deeper perception," says his closest friends. Says Dylan: **"I don't know about**

that, except that I'll be playing it at the Isle of Wight but all I can say is I'm happy with my new songs. They make me feel good."

Dylan, long known as his own best critic, has never said that before and this indicates his zest to return, as indeed was illustrated last month when he leaped on stage at a St. Louis concert and ad-libbed into an act completely unconcerned.

"I just had to do it. The music called and I went," reflected Dylan. **"Yeah – I'm rarin' to go. But don't believe I'm not nervous. Gee – I am. It's been a long time."**

In these past few weeks Dylan has been rehearsing with The Band who have stamped their own fame in America and elsewhere and the five-strong combo will be doubling up on a wide range of different instruments to provide the backing sounds for Dylan's Isle of Wight show.

"We're getting together a brand new repertoire and we may be on stage for a full three hours," declared Dylan.

His accident scars are now healed and he only gets minor symptoms when the weather is cold or he moves awkwardly or suddenly. **"Otherwise I feel fit and strong again and I think my voice is best as it's ever been,"** Bob tells me.

Through the last three years Bob has been nursed by his wife Sara Lownds. It was not generally known Bob was married, or that the couple have four children: Maria (4), Anna (3), Sam (2) and year old Jesse.

It's a disclosure which once more shows how Dylan has clung to protection from any intrusion on his personal life. But now he tells the story:
"Sara and I grew up as kids together in Minnesota. Then some years back we met again in a New York restaurant where Sara was working as a waitress."

"We fell in love – although it was not love at first sight and five years ago we were married in New York State."

Said Bob: **"We didn't advertise the fact as we feel our personal lives are what they mean. Otherwise we would have gone to Hollywood to live and become members of the showbiz set, which we hope we will never be."**

Bob is going to bring Sara and possibly the two elder children to Britain with him and while he is here he hopes to fulfil other plans.

"It is possible I will record in London," he told me: **"George Harrison has offered to let us use the Apple Studios and we hope to take up that opportunity while we are there."**

After Britain, Dylan and the Band will appear on a major city tour – **"although it won't be like the old days when we fell from exhaustion."**

He is also eyeing the prospects for his first film. **"That is something I would like very much, but the story line has got to be very strong... You know I wouldn't mind working for someone like Alfred Hitchcock. He wouldn't do anything thin... "**

I leave Dylan to get back to his rehearsal with the Band. **"So much for the future,"** he says. **"Now for the present and believe me the Isle of Wight show is the start of a new life for me..."**

To concur with his arrival CBS are to release *Lay Lady Lay* as a single track slipped from Dylan's latest album *Nashville Skyline* and Dylan is pleased to hear it; **"although there may be better singles in the fresh material."**

Dylan will get 50,000 dollars for the one night show and a cut of the profits and as we part the 28-year-old American spiritual folk leader laughs: **"And I can tell you man after all this time I need the money!"**

Money is an incentive, even to a genius.

27 August 1969
Richard Green Interview, Isle Of Wight, U.K.

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, p. 105.

From the Isle of Wight press conference at the Halland Hotel. Printed in the *New Musical Express* on August 30 1969.

"I want to see the home of Alfred, Lord Tennyson." That is the reason Bob Dylan gave at his Isle of Wight Press Conference on Wednesday for coming to Britain. Beyond that he would not elaborate, but he did say that the songs he will perform at the festival on Sunday might well be **"things you'll have heard before but with new arrangements."**

Sitting in the middle of a line of ten chairs, Dylan, looking a lot like Fidel Castro with his short beard and hair style, and continual tapping his sunglasses on his right knee, told me he had last appeared in St. Louis a month ago.

Asked what he felt about a report that the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Blind Faith and the Bee Gees wanted to jam with him, he smiled and replied: **"Great, great!"**

Did he think, I asked, he had changed a lot since we last saw him at the Royal Albert Hall –
"I believe there's a conscious thing since the accident.
"I haven't really changed. It had more to do with the show I was doing than anything else. It really had nothing to do with me personally."

Does he feel that his days of "protesting" are over? **"I don't want to protest anymore. I never said I am an angry young man."**

Then I asked him why the acetates he made with the Band had never been released. At this point, road manager Bert Block broke in and said: "Those songs were for the publishing company. Dylan and the Band record for different companies."

Because of his lack of public appearances I wondered if he liked doing shows. He replied: **"The more the better."**

That was all I could ask him in the fifteen minutes I had with him on Wednesday afternoon at the beachside Halland hotel, Sea View, Isle of Wight, where the Stones are staying during the festival. I'm staying here, too, so I should have lots of news for you next week.

How did I find Bob Dylan? About the same as in 1965 when I last saw him. He's still shy and inclined to be cynical. Perhaps if one could get him alone he might relax. But surrounded by his helpers, it was difficult to communicate freely with him. But I was very happy to have spoken to him on behalf of the NME.

27 August 1969
Isle Of Wight Press Conference

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 107-108.

From the Isle of Wight press conference at the Halland Hotel, four days before the celebrated concert. This is Dylan's first press conference since May 1966.

Ronnie Burns (RB) from BBC TV South kicks off the questioning.

RB: Why did you come to the Isle of Wight?
BD: I wanted to see the home of Alfred, Lord Tennyson.
RB: Why?
BD: Just curious.
RB: Can I have your general views on the situation of drug taking among teenagers and young people these days?
BD: I don't have any of those views... I wish I did, I'd be glad to share them with you, but I... I think everyone should lead their own lives you know.
RB: You used to, I believe, make public pronouncements on your views on things, like Vietnam, and it has been noticed in certain quarters you haven't been doing that recently, making your views known on big political and international issues. Is this deliberate policy on your part?
BD: No... I think that's more a rumor than a fact. You check your old newspapers, you won't be able to find too many statements I've made on those issues.
RB: I've heard it said here today by some of your fans that the new Bob Dylan is a bit of a square... Is that true?
BD: You'll have to ask the fans (amidst general laughter).

And now for the general press pack, including Lon Goddard (LG) of the Record Mirror.

Do you feel that your days of protesting are over?
BD: I don't want to protest any more. I never said I'm an angry young man.
LG: Can you tell us exactly what happened when you suffered an accident a while ago?
BD: Rikki... where are you?... (silence from Dylan for a moment) **It's true I suffered a broken neck. It's awful hard to explain. I have to take it easy sometimes.**
Bob.
BD: Yes, Ken (general laughter from press)**.**
Do you think you have changed very much since we last saw you in London? Your clothes and hair have changed?
BD: I believe there's a conscious thing since the accident. I haven't really changed... It had more to do with the show I was doing than anything else. It really had nothing to do with me personally... that stuff was all for publicity. I don't do that kind of thing any more.
Can you tell us what songs you will be performing?
BD: Everything we will do is on record. I'm not going to sing anything new... Things you will have heard before but with new arrangements
Because of your lack of public appearances, do you still like doing shows?
BD: We appeared a month ago in St Louis... the more shows the better.
Who are you looking forward to meeting while you're here?
BD: I'm hoping to meet anybody who's around. I'd like to meet The Who and maybe Georgie Fame.
What about the Beatles?

BD: George Harrison has come to visit me. The Beatles have asked me to work with them. I love the Beatles and I think it would be a good idea to do a jam session.
What about reports that various people will perform with you on stage?
BD: Great, great.
Do you feel that cameras are like guns?
BD: I don't know.
LG: Do you feel this change that has come over you and your music is due to domestic effects? Are you chiefly a family man now?
BD: I would think so.
There is a very large crowd expected here for your performance. Any comments on that?
BD: I just hope it's a good show.
Do you have a personal message for the kids today?
BD: Take it easy and do your job well.
What exactly then is your position on politics and music?
BD: My job is to play music. I think I've answered enough questions.

2 September 1969
Kennedy Airport Press Conference, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 839-840.

Comments made to the waiting press at Kennedy Airport, New York, on his return from the Isle Of Wight Festival – as reported in the *Liverpool Echo* (UK) on September 3rd, 1969.

I HAD A GRAND TIME, SAYS BOB DYLAN

American folk singer Bob Dylan returned home to the United States yesterday declaring that he had had a **"grand time"** at the giant pop, folk and rock festival held on the Isle of Wight over the weekend.

Dylan, a semi-recluse in recent years, told reporters at Kennedy Airport, New York, where he arrived by air from London that he had gone to the festival to **"get away from it all"** and to give himself a **"chance to break back in."**

Asked why he had disappointed the 170,000 fans gathered on the island by staying on stage for only one hour instead of anticipated two or three, Dylan noted that he had been scheduled to perform from 8:30 to 11 p.m.

He said he had arrived a 8.30 p.m. but because of delays, had only gone on stage at about 11 p.m.

"I performed. I did what I do", he said, adding that although he could not see his audience in the darkness, he **"gathered the reception was pretty good."**

Asked what he planned to do next, Dylan said: **"I'm going to put the show together and put it on the road."**

The folk singer said his show at the festival had been recorded and he hoped an album would be made of it.

Dylan added that he and his wife, Sara, who was with him, had both had **"rather a grand time"** at the festival.

Dylan said he had not yet seen any of the £35,000 he was reported to have received for his concert.

He said he had no wish to perform again in England. **"No more"**, he declared. **"They make too much of singers over there. Singers are front-page news. When the Bee Gees split it was all over the front page."**

29 November 1969
The Rolling Stone Interview, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 109-136.

Jann Wenner, editor of *Rolling Stone*, finally sat down with Dylan on June 26th 1969 after trying to make arrangements for an interview for over a year. The article was published that year in the November 29th issue of Rolling Stone. Dylan says that the interview was conducted at a time when he did not have the energy to concentrate on it and, according to Scaduto, Dylan was not paying much attention to what he was saying. For this reason the interview, although lengthy, was somewhat superficial and was badly received, proof, according to Heylin, that Dylan had lost touch with the real world.

They say Bob Dylan is the most secretive and elusive person in the entire rock and roll substructure but after doing this interview I think it would be closer to the point to say that Dylan, like *John Wesley Harding*, was "never known to make a foolish move".

The preparations for the interview illustrate this well. About eighteen months ago, I first started writing Bob letters asking for it. Then a little over a year ago, the night before I left New York, a message came from the hotel operator that a "Mr. Dillon" had called.

Two months later I met Bob for the first time at another hotel in New York. He casually strolled in wearing a sheepskin outfit, leather boots, very well put together but not too tall, y'understand. It was ten in the morning and I rolled out of bed stark naked – sleep that way, y'understand – and we talked for half an hour about doing an interview, what it was for, why it was necessary. Bob was feeling out the situation, making sure it would be cool.

That meeting was in late 1968. It took eight months – until the end of June this year – to finally get the interview. The meantime was covered with a lot of phone calls, near misses in New York City, Bob's trips to California which didn't take place and a lot of waiting and waiting for that right time when we were both ready for the show.

The interview took place on a Thursday afternoon in New York at my hotel, right round the corner from the funeral home where Judy Garland was being inspected by ten thousand people, who formed lines around several city blocks. We were removed from all that activity, but somehow it seemed appropriate enough that Judy Garland's funeral coincided with the interview.

Bob was very cautious in everything he said and took a long time between questions to phrase exactly what he wanted to say, nothing more and sometimes a little less. When I wasn't really satisfied with his answers, I asked questions another way, later, but Bob was hip.

Rather than edit the interview into tight chunks and long answers, I asked Sheryl to transcribe the tapes with all the pauses, asides and laughs left in. So much of the time it's not what is said but how it is said, and I think you will dig it more just as it went down.

To bring this up to date after all that, August through September was spent trying to get Baron together with Bob to get some new photographs of him, in a natural, nonperformance, situation. But it proved fruitless. Perhaps if we had had another six months to work on getting the photographs but Bob was simply not to be rushed or pushed into something he really didn't

feel like doing at the time. ("I'll have Baron meet you in New York tomorrow." "Well, tomorrow I might be in Tucson, Arizona". "Baron will fly to Tucson." Etc.)

The photographs we have used are from rehearsals for the *Johnny Cash Show* and from the Isle of Wight, ones you probably have not seen yet, and some photos of Bob from a long time ago. Bob promised that we would get together soon to take some photos, and if we do, you'll see them as soon as we get them. But don't hold your breath.

Meantime here's the interview.

JW: When do you think you're gonna go on the road?
BD: November... possibly December.
JW: What kind of dates do you think you'll play — concerts? Big stadiums or small concert halls?
BD: I'll play medium sized halls.
JW: What thought do you have on the kind of back-up you're going to use?
BD: Well, we'll keep it real simple, you know... drums... bass... second guitar... organ... piano. Possibly some horns. Maybe some background voices.
JW: Girls? Like the Raylettes?
BD: We could use some girls.
JW: Do you have any particular musicians in mind at this time?
BD: To go out on the road? Well, I always have some in mind. I'd like to know a little bit more about what I'm gonna do. You see, when I discover what I'm gonna do, then I can figure out what kind of a sound I want. I'd probably use... I'd want the best band around, you know?
JW: Are you going to use studio musicians or use some already existing bands?
BD: I don't know... You see, it involves putting other people on the bill, full-time. I'd only probably use the Band again... if I went around.
JW: And they'd do the first half of the show?
BD: Sure... sure.
JW: Are you thinking of bringing any other artists with you?
BD: Well, every so often we do think about that. (Laughter) **We certainly do. I was thinking about maybe introducing Marvin Rainwater or Slim Whitman to "my audience".**
JW: Have you been in touch with either of them?
BD: No... no.
JW: What did you think when you saw yourself on the Cash show?
BD: (Laughs) **Oh, I'd never see that... I can't stand to see myself on television. No.**
JW: Did you dig doing it?
BD: I dig doing it, yeah. Well, you know, television isn't like anything else... It's also like the movie business, you know, where they call you and then you just sit around. So by the time you finally do something, you have to do it three or four times, and usually all the spirit's gone.
JW: You didn't watch it on TV?
BD: (Laughs) **I did watch it on TV... Just because I wanted to see Johnny. I didn't realize they slowed Doug Kershaw down, too. They slowed his song down to... His song was like this...** (taps out steady beat)... **And they slowed him down to...** (taps slow rhythm)... **you know?**
JW: Just by slowing down the tape?
BD: They just slowed him down. I don't know what happened. I think the band slowed him down or something, but boy he was slowed down. During rehearsal and just sitting around, he played these songs... The way we was going at it, maybe three-quarter time, and they slowed him down to about two-thirds time, you know?
JW: Did you have any difficulty working with the TV people doing something like that?

BD: Oh no, no, they're wonderful people... They really are. It was by far the most enjoyable television program I've ever done. I don't do television just because you get yourself in such a mess... So I don't do it.

JW: You told me once that you were going to do a TV special?

BD: That's what I'm talking about.

JW: In Hollywood?

BD: No, I'm talking about CBS.

JW: In New York?

BD: Well, we don't know that yet. They don't have in mind exactly what they would like. They kind of leave it wide open, so we're trying to close the gap now.

JW: What do you have in mind for it?

BD: Oh, I just have some, free-form type things in mind. A lot of music.

JW: Presenting other artists?

BD: Sure... I don't mind. I don't know who, but...

JW: Why haven't you worked in so long?

BD: Well, uh... I do work.

JW: I mean on the road.

BD: On the road... I don't know, working on the road... Well, Jann, I'll tell ya – I was on the road for almost five years. It wore me down. I was on drugs, a lot of things. A lot of things just to keep going, you know? And I don't want to live that way anymore. And, uh... I'm just waiting for a better time – you know what I mean?

JW: What would you do that would make the tour that you're thinking about doing different from the ones you did do?

BD: Well, I'd like to slow down the pace a little. The one I did do... The next show's gonna be a lot different from the last show. The last show, during the first half, of which there was about an hour, I only did maybe six songs. My songs were long, long songs. But that's why I had to start dealing with a lot of different methods of keeping myself awake, alert... Because I had to remember all the words to those songs. I've written 'em for the road, you know. So I'll be doing all these songs on the road. They're gonna sound a lot better than they do on record. My songs always sound a lot better in person than they do on the record.

JW: Why?

BD: Well, I don't know why. They just do.

JW: On *Nashville Skyline* – who does the arrangements? The studio musicians, or...

BD: Boy, I'd wish you could've come along the last time we made an album. You'd probably enjoyed it... 'Cause you see right there, you know how it's done. We just take a song. I play it and everyone else just sort of fills in behind it. No sooner you got that done, and at the same time you're doing that, there's someone in the control booth who's turning all those dials to where the proper sound is coming in... And then it's done. Just like that.

JW: Just out of rehearsing it? It'll be a take?

BD: Well, maybe we'll take about two times.

JW: Were there any songs on *Nashville Skyline* that took longer to take?

BD: I don't know... I don't think so. There's a movie out now, called *Midnight Cowboy*. You know the song on the album *Lay Lady Lay*? Well, I wrote that song for that movie. These producers, they wanted some music for their movie. This was last summer. And this fellow there asked me, you know, if I could do some music for their movie. So I came up with that song. By the time I came up with it, though, it was too late. (Laughs) **It's the same old story all the time. It's just too late... So I kept this song and recorded it.**

JW: There's something going on with *Easy Rider* – you wrote the lyrics for a song that Roger McGuinn wrote the music for, or something? Something... writing a song for *Easy Rider*, the Peter Fonda film? Were you involved in that at all?

BD: They used some of my music in it. They used a song of the Bands too. They also used Steppenwolf music. I don't know anything more about it than that.

JW: Do you know which song of yours they used?

BD: *It's Alright, Ma* – but they had Roger McGuinn singing it.

JW: Have you been approached to write music for any other movies?

BD: Uh-hum.

JW: Considering any of them?

BD: Unh-unh.

JW: Why? Scripts?

BD: Umm... I don't know. I just can't seem to keep my mind on it. I can't keep my mind on the movie. I had a script awhile ago, that was called *Zachariah and the Seven Cowboys*. (Laughs) **That was some script. Every line in it was taken out of the Bible. And just thrown together. Then there was another one *The Impossible Toy*. Have you seen that?** (Laughs) **Let's see, what else? Umm... No, I'm not planning on doing any music for movies.**

JW: When are you going to do another record?

BD: You mean when am I going to put out an album?

JW: Have you done another record?

BD: No... Not exactly. I was going to try and have another one out by the fall.

JW: Is it done in Nashville again?

BD: Well we... I think so... I mean it's... Seems to be as good a place as any.

JW: What first got you involved with or attracted you to the musicians at the Columbia Studios?

BD: Nashville? Well we always used them since *Blonde on Blonde*. Well we didn't use Pete on *Blonde On Blonde*.

JW: What was Joe South like to work with?

BD: Joe South? Well, he was quiet. He didn't say too much. I always did like him though.

JW: Do you like his record?

BD: I love his records.

JW: That album, *Introspect*?

BD: Um-hmm. I always enjoyed his guitar playing. Ever since I heard him.

JW: Does he have any solos on *Blonde On Blonde*?

BD: Um-hmm. Yes he does. He has a... He's playing a high guitar lick on... Well, if you named me the songs, I could tell you which one it was, but it's catchin' my mind at the moment. He was playing... He played a big, I believe it was a Gretsch, guitar – one of those Chet Atkins models. That's the guitar he played it on.

JW: *Absolutely Sweet Marie*?

BD: Yeah, it could've been that one. Or *Just Like A Woman*... one of those. Boy he just... he played so pretty.

JW: On *Nashville Skyline*, do you have any song on that that you particularly dig? Above the others.

BD: Uh... *Tonight I'll Be Staying Here With You*. I like *Tell Me That Isn't True*, although it came out completely different than I'd written it. It came out real slow and mellow. I had it written as sort of a jerky, kind of polka-type thing. I wrote it in F. I wrote a lot of songs on this new album in F. That's what gives it a kind of a new sound. They're all in F... not all of them, but quite a few. There's not many on that album that aren't in F. So you see I had these chords... Which gives it a certain sound. I try to be a little different on every album.

JW: I'm sure you read the review of *Nashville Skyline*. Everybody remarks on the change of your singing style...

BD: Well, Jann, I'll tell you something. There's not too much of a change in my singing style, but I'll tell you something which is true... I stopped smoking. When I stopped smoking

my voice changed... So drastically, I couldn't believe it myself. That's true. I tell you, you stop smoking those cigarettes (laughter)... **and you'll be able to sing like Caruso.**

JW: How many songs did you go into *Nashville Skyline* with?

BD: I went in with uh... The first time I went into the studio I had, I think, four songs. I pulled that instrumental one out... I needed some songs with an instrumental... Then Johnny came in and did a song with me. Then I wrote one in the motel... Then pretty soon the whole album started fillin' in together and we had an album. I mean, we didn't go down with that in mind. That's why I wish you were there... You could've really seen it happen. It just manipulated out of nothing.

JW: How many songs did you do with Johnny?

BD: Well, we did quite a few. We just sat down and started doing some songs... But you know how those things are. You get into a room with someone, you start playing and singing, and you sort of forget after a while what you're there for. (Laughs)

JW: You must have a lotta songs with him on tape... Are you thinking of putting out a collection of them?

BD: Well, I'm not, no. But you usually have to leave those things in the hands of the producers.

JW: Is there one afoot?

BD: A tape?

JW: No, an album.

BD: No... Not that I know of. If there was an album, I believe that we would have to go back into the studio and record some more songs.

JW: There's not enough there already... or it's just not good enough?

BD: Well, it's uh... What it comes down to is a choice of material. If they wanted an album – a joint album – they could probably get a lot more material with a broader range on it. If we went there with actually certain songs in mind to do... See, that didn't happen last time.

JW: Why did you make the change of producers from Tom Wilson to Bob Johnston?

BD: Well, I can't remember, Jann. I can't remember... All I know is that I was out recording one day, and Tom had always been there – I had no reason to think he wasn't going to be there – and I looked up one day and Bob was there. (Laughs)

JW: There's been some articles on Wilson and he says that he's the one that gave you the rock and roll sound... And started you doing rock and roll. Is that true?

BD: Did he say that? Well, if he said it... (laughs) **more power to him.** (Laughs) **He did to a certain extent. That is true. He did. He had a sound in mind.**

JW: Have you ever thought of doing an album... a very arranged, very orchestrated album, you know, with chicks and...?

BD: Gee... I've thought of it... I think about it once in a while. Yeah.

JW: You think you might do one?

BD: I do whatever comes naturally. I'd like to do an album like that. You mean using my own material and stuff.

JW: Yeah, using your own material but with vocal background and...

BD: I'd like to do it. Who wouldn't?

JW: When did you make the change from John Hammond... or what caused the change from John Hammond?

BD: John Hammond. He signed me in 1960. He signed me to Columbia Records. I think he produced my first album. I think he produced my second album too.

JW: And Tom Wilson was also working at Columbia at the time?

BD: He was... you know, I don't recall how that happened... or why that switch took place. I remember at one time I was about to record for Don Law. You know Don Law? I was about to record for Don Law, but I never did. I met Don Law in New York, in 1962... and again recently, last year when I did the *John Wesley Harding* album, I met him down in the studio. He came in... He's a great producer. He produced many of the

earlier records for Columbia and also for labels which they had before – Okeh and stuff like that. I believe he did the Robert Johnston records.

JW: What did you do in the year between *Blonde On Blonde* and *John Wesley Harding*?

BD: Well I was on tour part of the time... Australia, Sweden... an overseas tour. Then I came back... And in the spring of that year, I was scheduled to go out – it was a month off, I had a one-month vacation – I was gonna go back on the road again in July. *Blonde On Blonde* was up on the charts at this time. At that time I had a dreadful motorcycle accident... which put me away for a while... and I still didn't sense the importance of that accident till at least a year after that. I realized that it was a real accident. I mean I thought that I was just gonna get up and go back to doing what I was doing before... But I couldn't do it anymore. What did I do during that year? I helped work on a film... Which was supposed to be aired on *Stage 67*, a television show which isn't on anymore. I don't think it was on for very long. What change? Well, it... it limited me. It's hard to speak about the change, you know? It's not the type of change that one can put into words... besides the physical change. I had a busted vertebrae, neck vertebrae. And there's really not much to talk about. I don't want to talk about it.

JW: Laying low for a year, you must have had time to think. That was the ABC-TV show? What happened to the tapes of that? How come that never got shown?

BD: Well, I could make an attempt to answer that, but... (laughs)... **I think my manager could probably answer it a lot better.**

JW: I don't think he answers too many questions.

BD: Doesn't he? He doesn't answer questions? Well he's a nice guy. He'll usually talk to you if you show some enthusiasm for what you're talking about.

JW: So what happened to the tapes?

BD: You mean that film? As far as I know, it will be sold... or a deal will be made, for its sale. That's what I'm told. But you see, Jann, I don't hold these movie people in too high a position. You know this movie, *Dont Look Back*? Well, that splashed my face all over the world, that movie. I didn't get a penny from that movie, you know... So when people say why don't you go out and work and why don't you do this and why don't you do that, people don't know half of what a lot of these producers and people, lawyers... they don't know the half of those stories. I'm an easy-going kind of fellow, you know... I forgive and forget. I like to think that way. But I'm not interested in finding out anymore about any film.

JW: Did you like *Dont Look Back*?

BD: I'd like it a lot more if I got paid for it. (Laughter)

JW: There was supposed to be another film that Pennebaker shot – I don't know when or where -maybe it was the ABC film...

BD: That was it. Sure it was. That's the one you're talking about.

JW: Is it a good one?

BD: Well, we cut it fast on the eye. I'd have to let you see it for yourself, to think about if it's a good one. For me, it's too fast for the eye... But there are quite a few people who say it's really good. Johnny Cash is in it. John Lennon's in it. The Band's in it. Who else... A lot of different people from the European capitals of the world are in it.

JW: Princes and princesses? (Laughs)

BD: Well, not princesses (laughs) **but presidents** (laughs) **and people like that.**

JW: What is the nature of your acquaintance with John Lennon?

BD: Oh, I always love to see John. Always. He's a wonderful fellow... and I always like to see him.

JW: He said that the first time that you met, in New York, after one of the concerts or something like that, it was a very uptight situation.

BD: It probably was, yes. Like, you know how it used to be for them. They couldn't go out of their room. They used to tell me you could hardly get in to see them. There used to be

people surrounding them, not only in the streets, but in the corridors in the hotel. I should say it was uptight.

JW: How often have you seen them subsequently?

BD: Well, I haven't seen them too much recently.

JW: What do you think of the bed-ins for peace? Him and Yoko.

BD: Well, you know... Everybody's doing what they can do. I don't mind what he does, really... I always like to see him.

JW: Do you read the current critics? The music critics, so-called "rock and roll writers"?

BD: Well I try to keep up. I try to keep up-to-date... I realize I don't do a very good job in keeping up to date, but I try to. I don't know half the groups that are playing around now. I don't know half of what I should.

JW: Are there any that you've seen that you dig?

BD: Well I haven't seen any.

JW: I mean like Traffic, and...

BD: See, I never saw Traffic... I never even saw Cream. I feel bad about those things, but what can I do?

JW: See them? (laughs)

BD: Well, I can't now. I'm going to see this new group, called Blind Faith. I'm going to make it my duty to go see them... 'Cause they'll probably be gone (laughter) **in another year or so. So I'd better get up there quick and see them.**

JW: Do you like Stevie Winwood singing?

BD: Oh sure, sure... Stevie Winwood, he came to see us in Manchester. Last time we were in Manchester... That was 1966. Or was it Birmingham? His brother – he's got a brother named Muff – Muff took us all out to see a haunted house, outside of Manchester, or Birmingham, one of those two. Or was it Newcastle? Something like that. We went out to see a haunted house, where a man and his dog was to have burned up in the thirteenth century. Boy, that place was spooky. That's the last time I saw Stevie Winwood.

JW: Have you heard the Traffic records?

BD: I heard them doing *Gimme Some Loving*. I love that. I didn't get all the names... after that. I seem to recall hearing a Traffic record. I know I've heard the Traffic... the group, Traffic, on the radio. I've heard that.

JW: Have you heard the San Francisco bands?

BD: Jefferson Airplane? Quicksilver Messenger Service? Yeah, I've heard them. The Grateful Dead.

JW: Do you like them?

BD: Yeah, sure do.

JW: Is there anything happening on the current rock and roll scene that strikes you as good?

BD: Yeah, I heard a record by Johnny Thunder. It's called *I'm Alive*. Never heard it either, huh? Well, I can't believe it. Everyone I've talked to, I've asked them if they've heard that record.

JW: Is it on the radio right now?

BD: I don't know. I heard it on the radio a month ago, two months ago... three months ago. It was one of the most powerful records I've ever heard. It's called *I'm Alive* by Johnny Thunder. Well, it was that sentiment, truly expressed. That's the most I can say... If you heard the record, you'd know what I mean. But that's about all...

JW: Do you like the stuff that Ray Stevens is doing?

BD: Oh, I've always liked Ray Stevens. Sure.

JW: Have you had occasion to go to Memphis, you know, when you're down there... or Muscle Shoals or Pensacola, any of the great musical centers of the South?

BD: No, I've never been in any of the recording studios there.

JW: Have you ever met Ray Stevens?

BD: Uh, I've been in the same building as Ray Stevens. He was behind another door... But I've never met him. I've never shook his hand. No.

JW: I don't want to get nosy or get into your personal life but there was a series recently in the *Village Voice* about your growing up, living, and going to high school. Did you read that series?

BD: Yeah I did. At least, I read some of it.

JW: Was it accurate?

BD: Well, it was accurate as far as this fellow who was writing it... this fellow... I wouldn't have read it if I thought... he was using me to write his story. So I feel a little unusual in this case, 'cause I can see through this writers aims. But as far as liking it or disliking it, I didn't do neither of those things. I mean it's just publicity from where I am. So if they want to spend six or seven issues writing about me (laughs)... **as long as they get it right, you know, as long as they get it in there, I can't complain.**

JW: You must have some feelings about picking up a newspaper that has a hundred thousand circulation and seeing that some guy's gone and talked to your parents and your cousins, and uncles...

BD: Well, the one thing I did... I don't like the way this writer talked about my father who has passed away. I didn't dig him talking about my father and using his name. Now that's the only thing about the article I didn't dig. But that boy has got some lessons to learn.

JW: What did he say?

BD: That don't matter what he said. He didn't have no right to speak about my father, who has passed away. If he wants to do a story on me, that's fine. I don't care what he wants to say about me. But to uh... I got the feeling that he was taking advantage of some good people that I used to know and he was making fun of a lot of things. I got the feeling he was making fun of quite a few things... this fellow, Toby. You know what I mean, Jann? Soooo... we'll just let that stand as it is... for now.

JW: I've gone through all the collected articles that have appeared, all the early ones and Columbia records' biographies, that's got the story about running away from home at eleven and twelve and thirteen-one-half... Why did you put out that story?

BD: I didn't put out any of those stories!

JW: Well it's the standard Bob Dylan biography...

BD: Well, you know how it is, Jann... If you're sittin' in a room, and you have to have something done... I remember once, I was playing at Town Hall, and the producer of it came over with that biography... You know, I'm a songwriter, I'm not a biography writer, and I need a little help with these things. So if I'm sitting in a room with some people, and I say "Come on now, I need some help. Gimme a biography". So there might be three or four people – maybe they'll come up with something, come up with a biography. So we put it down it reads well, and the producer of the concert is satisfied. In fact, he even gets a kick out of it. You dig what I mean? But in actuality this thing wasn't written for hundreds of thousands of people... It was just a little game for whoever was going in there and getting a ticket, you know, they get one of these things too. That's just show business. So you do that, and pretty soon you've got a million people who get it on the side. You know? They start thinkin' that it's written for all of them. And it's not written for them – it was written for someone who bought the ticket to the concert. You got all these other people taking it too seriously. Do you know what I mean? So a lot of things have been blown out of proportion.

JW: At the time when all your records were out and you were working and everybody was writing stories about you, you let that become your story... You sort of covered up your parents, and your old friends... You sort of kept people away from them...

BD: Did I?

JW: Well, that was the impression it gave...

BD: Jann, you know, my best friends... you're talking about old friends, and best friends... if you want to go by those standards, I haven't seen my best friends for over fifteen years. You know what I mean? I'm not in the business of covering anything up. If I was from New Jersey, I could make an effort to show people my old neighborhood. If I was from Baltimore, same thing. Well, I'm from the Midwest. Boy, that's two different worlds. This whole east coast... there are a few similarities between the east coast and the Midwest and, of course, the people are similar, but it's a big jump. So, I came out of the Midwest, but I'm not interested in leading anybody back there. That's not my game.

JW: Why do you choose to live on the east?

BD: Well, because we're nearer New York now. We don't choose anything... We just go with the wind. That's it.

JW: Most people who become successful in records, especially artists, start wondering at some point about whether they're becoming businessmen, taking care of contracts, and making money... did you ever get that?

BD: Yeah, I certainly did. I'd love to become a businessman. (Laughs) **Love it. Love it.**

JW: What do you think of the music business?

BD: I'd love to become a businessman in the music business.

JW: Doing what?

BD: Well, doing that same thing that other businessmen are doing... talking about recording, publishing, producing...

JW: Have you ever wanted to produce an album for some other artist?

BD: I have.

JW: Which one?

BD: Uh... It's been a long time. I can't even remember which one. I saw somebody once, it was down in the Village. Anyway...

JW: Are there any artists around today that you'd like to produce?

BD: Well, there was some talk about producing Burt Lancaster doing the hymn *I Saw St. Augustine*...

JW: Well, the movie business being what it is... going back to reviews that you've gotten for various albums; everybody has a lot of strange interpretations and decisions... have you ever read any criticisms about that that you liked or thought was accurate – or possibly got close to what you were trying to do?

BD: Mmm... I can't say that I have. I don't recall. Like I say, Jann, I don't keep up with it as much as I should.

JW: At the time when *Highway 61* and *Bringing It All Back Home* were coming out... do you remember anything from them?

BD: Do you?

JW: Yeah, the liner notes.

BD: What did you like about those liner notes?

JW: I think they were very groovy. They explained what was going on in the album and how the album came to be recorded and how it all came to be said. Why didn't you publish Tarantula?

BD: Why? Well... It's a long story. It begins with when I suddenly began to sell quite a few records and a certain amount of publicity began to be carried in all the major news magazines about this "rising young star". Well, this industry being what it is, book companies began sending me contracts because I was doing interviews before and after concerts and reporters would say things like "What else do you write?" And I would say: "Well, I don't write much of anything else." And they would say: "Oh, come on, you must write other things. Tell us something else. Do you write books?" And I'd say: "Sure, I write books." After the publishers saw that I wrote books, they began to send me contracts... Doubleday, MacMillan, Hill and Range (laughter)... **we took the biggest one, and then owed them a book. You follow me? But there was no book. We just took the biggest contract. Why? I don't know. Why I did, I don't know. Why was I told to do**

it, I don't know. Anyway, I owed them a book. So I sat down and said: "Wow, I've done many things before. It's not so hard to write a book." So I sat down and wrote them a book in the hotel rooms and different places, plus I got a lot of other papers laying around that other people had written, so I threw it all together in a week and sent it to them. Well, it wasn't long after that when I got it back to proof-read it. I got it back and I said: "My gosh. Did I write this? I'm not gonna have this out." Do you know what I mean? I'm not gonna put this out. The folks back home just won't understand this at all. I said: "Well, I have to do some corrections on this," I told them, and set about correcting it. I told them I was improving it. Boy, they were hungry for this book. They didn't care what it was. They just wanted... people up there were saying "Boy, that's the second James Joyce" and "Jack Kerouac again" and they were saying "Homer revisited"... And they were all just talking through their heads. They just wanted to sell books, that's all they wanted to do. It wasn't about anything... and I knew that – I figured they had to know that, they were in the business of it. I knew that, and I was just nobody. If I knew it, where were they at? They were just playing with me. My book. So I wrote a new book. I figured I was satisfied with it and I sent that in. Wow, they looked at that and said: "Well that's another book." And I said: "Well, but it's better." And they said: "Okay we'll print this." So they printed that up and sent that back to proffered it. So I proofread it – I just looked at the first paragraph – and knew I just couldn't let that stand. So I took the whole thing with me on tour. I was going to rewrite it all. Carried a typewriter around... around the world. Trying to meet this deadline which they'd given me to put this book out. They just backed me into a corner. A lot of invisible people. So finally, I had a deadline on it and was working on it, before my motorcycle accident. And I was studying all kinds of different prints and how I wanted them to print the book, by this time. I also was studying a lot of other poets at this time... I had books which I figured could lead me somewhere... and I was using a little bit from everything. But still, it wasn't my book. It was just to satisfy the publishers who wanted to print something that we had a contract for. Follow me? So eventually, I had my motorcycle accident and that just got me out of the whole thing. 'cause I didn't care anymore. As it stands now, Jann, I could write a book. But I'm gonna write it first, and then give it to them. You know what I mean?

JW: Do you have any particular subject in mind, or plan, for a book?

BD: Do you?

JW: For yours or mine?

BD: (Laughs) **For any of them.**

JW: What writers today do you dig? Like who would you read if you were writing a book? Mailer?

BD: All of them. There's something to be learned from them all.

JW: What about the poets? You once said something about Smokey Robinson...

BD: I didn't mean Smokey Robinson. I meant Arthur Rimbaud. I don't know how I could have got Smokey Robinson mixed up with Arthur Rimbaud. (Laughter) **But I did.**

JW: Do you see Allen Ginsberg much?

BD: Not at all. Not at all.

JW: Do you think he had any influence on your song-writing at all?

BD: I think he did at a certain period. That period of... *Desolation Row*. That kind of New York Type period, when all the songs were just "city songs". His poetry is city poetry. Sounds like the city.

JW: Before, you were talking about touring and using drugs. During that period of songs like *Mr Tambourine Man* and *Baby Blue*, which a lot of writers have connected to the drug experience, not in the sense of them being "psychedelic music", or drug songs, but having come out of the drug experience.

BD: How so?

JW: In terms of perceptions. All level of perceptions... awareness of the songs...

BD: Awareness of the minute. You mean that?
JW: An awareness of the mind.
BD: I would say so.
JW: Did taking drugs influence the songs?
BD: No, not the writing of them. But it did keep me up there to pump 'em out.
JW: Why did you leave the city and city songs for the country and country songs?
BD: The country songs?
JW: The songs... you were talking about *Highway 61* being a song of the city, and songs of New York City...
BD: What was on the album?
JW: *Highway 61*? *Desolation Row*, *Queen Jane*...
BD: Well, it was also what the audience wanted to hear too... Don't forget that. When you play every night in front of an audience you know what they want to hear. It's easier to write songs then. You know what I'm talking about?
JW: Who do you think your current audience is? Who do you think you're selling records to? What kind of people?
BD: Well I don't know, when I go out on the road, I'll find out, won't I?
JW: Did you get any indication of that from who showed up in the audience in Nashville?
BD: No, they were just people. I find every audience more or less the same, although you can have a certain attachment or disattachment for one because it may be bigger or smaller. But... people are just people.
JW: Many people – writers, college students, college writers – all felt tremendously affected by your music and what you're saying in the lyrics.
BD: Did they?
JW: Sure. They felt it had a particular relevance to their lives... I mean, you must be aware of the way that people come on you.
BD: Not entirely. Why don't you explain to me.
JW: I guess if you reduce it to its simplest terms, the expectation of your audience – the portion of your audience that I'm familiar with – feels that you have the answer.
BD: What answer?
JW: Like from the film, *Dont Look Back* – people asking you "Why? What is it? Where is it?" People are tremendously hung-up on what you write and what you say, tremendously hung-up. Do you react to that at all? Do you feel responsible to those people?
BD: I don't want to make anybody worry about it... but boy, If I could ease someone's mind, I'd be the first one to do it. I want to lighten every load. Straighten out every burden. I don't want anybody to be hung-up... (laughs) **especially over me, or anything I do. That's not the point at all.**
JW: Let me put it another way... What I'm getting at is that you're an extremely important figure in music and an extremely important figure in the experience of growing up today. Whether you put yourself in that position or not, you're in that position. And you must have thought about it... and I'm curious to know what you think about that...
BD: What would I think about it? What can I do?
JW: You wonder if you're really that person.
BD: What person?
JW: A great "youth leader"...
BD: If I thought I was that person, wouldn't I be out there doing it? Wouldn't I be, if I was meant to do that, wouldn't I be doing it? I don't have to hold back. This Maharishi, he thinks that – right? He's out there doing it. If I thought that, I'd be out there doing it. Don't you... you agree, right? So obviously, I don't think that.
JW: What do you feel about unwillingly occupying that position?
BD: I can see that position filled by someone else... not by... the position you're speaking of... I play music, man. I write songs. I have a certain balance about things and I believe there should be an order to everything. Underneath it all. I believe also, that there are

people trained for this job that you're talking about – "youth leader" types of thing, you know? I mean, there must be people trained to do this type of work. And I'm just one person, doing what I do. Trying to get along... Staying out of people's hair, that's all.

JW: You've been also a tremendous influence on a lot of musicians and writers, they're very obviously affected by your style, the way you do things...

BD: Who?

JW: Well, somebody like Phil Ochs, for example... A lot of people like that.

BD: Phil Ochs, uh... was around the same time I was, I remember when he came to town. He had his... he was doing his *Stand Tall Billy Sol* type songs. I mean, he had it then. I think he made it, there being a certain amount of momentum – he pushed – from being on the scene. But he did bring his own thing in, when he came in. He didn't – as some people come in – come in as a dishwasher to dig some sounds and suddenly put down the broom and pick up the guitar. You know what I mean?

JW: I'm thinking also of other singers, of people who were singing before and playing the guitar.

BD: Do you see any influence in the Motown? All those things that the Motown records are doing right now? Like *Runaway Child* and those kind of things. I mean, Motown wasn't doing those kind of records a few years ago, were they? What do you think they're doing, Jann? Are they really sincere and all that kind of thing?

JW: I think they're sincere about making good records, and they're going to sell a lot of them. I dig that. Do you like the Motown records?

BD: Well, yeah... I like them...

JW: Do you like the ones today better than the ones they were doing before?

BD: Oh, I have always liked the Motown records. Always. But because I like them so much, I see that change.

JW: Have you got anything to do with that change?

BD: Have I? Not that I know of.

JW: Do you think that you've played any role in the change of popular music in the last four years?

BD: I hope not (laughs).

JW: Well, a lot of people say you have.

BD: (Laughs) **Well, you know, I'm not one to argue.** (Laughs)

JW: There's a lot of talk about you and Albert Grossman, your relationship with Albert Grossman, and whether he's going to continue to manage you.

BD: Well... as far as I know, things will remain the same, until the length of our contract. And if we don't sign another contract, or if he doesn't have a hand in producing my next concerts or have a hand in any of my next work, it's only because he's too busy. 'Cause he's got so many acts now... It's so hard for him to be in all places all the time. I mean you know, it's the old story... you can't be in two places at once. That old story. You know what I mean?

JW: When does your contract with him expire?

BD: Some time this year.

JW: You were supposed to leave Columbia and sign with MGM? A million dollars... what happened to that?

BD: It... went up in smoke.

JW: Did you want a new label?

BD: I didn't, no.

JW: Who did?

BD: I believe my advisers.

JW: I take it you haven't had any recent trouble with Columbia, like you used to have in the beginning...

BD: No... no.

JW: Do you know approximately how many songs that you've recorded that have not been released? Like songs left over from recording *John Wesley Harding* or *Blonde On Blonde*? Do you have any idea how many?

BD: Well, we try to use them all. There may be a few lying around.

JW: What do you think was the best song, popular song, to come out last year?

BD: Uh... I like that one... of Creedence Clearwater Revival – *Rolling On The River*?

JW: Any others?

BD: George Jones had one called *Small Town Laboring Man*.

JW: You've been very reluctant to talk to reporters, the press and so on... Why is that?

BD: Why would you think?

JW: Well, I know why you wouldn't go on those things.

BD: Well, if you know why, you tell 'em... 'Cause I find it hard to talk about that. People don't understand how the press works. People don't understand that the press, they just used to sell papers. And, in a certain way, that's not bad... But when they misquote you all the time, and when they just use you to fill in some story. And when you read it after, it isn't anything the way you pictured it happening. Well, anyhow, it hurts. It hurts because you think you were just played for a fool. And the more hurts you get, the less you want to do it. Ain't that correct?

JW: Were there any writers that you met that you liked? That you felt did good jobs? Wrote accurate stories...

BD: On what?

JW: On you. For instance, I remember two big pieces – one was in the New Yorker, by Nat Hentoff...

BD: Yeah, I like 'em. I like that. In a way, I like 'em all, whether I feel bad about 'em or not, in a way I like 'em all. I seldom get a lick out of them, Jann, but... I mean, I just can't be spending my time reading what people write. (Laughter) **I don't know anybody who can, do you?**

JW: How much of the day do you think about song-writing and playing the guitar?

BD: Well, I try to get it when it comes. I play the guitar wherever I find one. But I try to write the song when it comes. I try to get it all... 'Cause if you don't get it all, you're not gonna get it. So the best kinds of songs you can write are in motel rooms and cars... places which are all temporary. 'Cause you're forced to do it. Rather, it let's you go into it. You go into your kitchen and try to write a song, and you can't write a song – I know people who do this – I know some songwriters who go to work every day, at eight-thirty and come home at five o'clock. And usually bring something back... I mean, that's legal too. It just depends on... how you do it. Me, I don't have those kind of things known to me yet, so I just get 'em when they come. And when they don't come, I don't try for it.

JW: There's been a lot of artists who have done your songs... songs that you have released and songs that you haven't released. Have you written any songs lately for any other artists to do, specifically for that artist? Or any of your old songs.

BD: I wrote *To Be Alone With You* – that's on *Nashville Skyline* – I wrote it for Jerry Lee Lewis. (Laughter) **He was down there when we were listening to the playbacks, and he came in. He was recording an album next door. He listened to it... I think we sent him a dub. *Peggy Day* – I kind of had the Mills Brothers in mind when I did that one.** (Laughter)

JW: Have you approached them yet?

BD: (Laughter) **No. unfortunately, I haven't.**

JW: During what period of time did you write the songs on *Nashville Skyline*? During the month before you went to do it or...

BD: Yeah, about a month before we did it. That's why it seemed to be all connected.

JW: Your going to do your next album in Nashville?

BD: I don't know, Jann. I don't know where I'm gonna be doing the next album. Sometimes I envy the Beatles... They just go down to the studio, and play around... I mean, you're

bound to get a record. You know what I mean? Bound to get a record. Their studio is just a drive away... Boy, I'd have an album out every month. I mean, how could you not?

JW: Have you ever thought about getting four- or eight-track equipment up where you live?

BD: Well, everyone's talking about that now. But it's just talk as far as I know. I would come to New York if I wanted to use the studio, because it's all here... if you need a good engineer, or if you need a song, or somebody to record it, an artist... Whereas someplace like up in the country there, in the mountains, you could get a studio in, but that doesn't guarantee anything else but the studio. You can get violin players, cello players, you can get dramatic readers... You can get anybody at the drop of a hat, in New York City. I imagine it's that way over in London, where the Beatles make their records. Anything they want to put on their record, they just call up and it's there. I'd like to be in that position.

JW: What do you look for when you make a record... I mean, what qualities do you judge it by when you hear it played back?

BD: Umm... for the spirit. I like to hear a good lick once in a while. Maybe it's the spirit... Don't you think so? I mean, if the spirit's not there, it don't matter how good a song it is or...

JW: What do you think of the current rock and roll groups doing all the country music?

BD: Well, once again, it really doesn't matter what kind of music they do, just so long as people are making music. That's a good sign. There are certainly more people around making music than there was when I was growing up. I know that.

JW: Do you find any that are particularly good – country rock, or merely rock and roll bands, doing country material, using steel guitars?

BD: As long as it sounds good.

JW: Do any particular one of those groups appeal to you?

BD: Who... who are in those groups?

JW: Oh, Flying Burrito Brothers...

BD: Boy, I love them... The Flying Burrito Brothers, unh-huh. I've always known Chris, you know, from when he was in the Byrds. And he's always been a fine musician. Their records knocked me out. (Laughs) **That poor little hippie boy on his way to town...** (Laughs)

JW: What about the Byrds... they did a country album...

BD: *Sweetheart*? Well, they had a distinctive sound, the Byrds... they usually were hanging in there...

JW: Of all the versions of *This Wheel's On Fire*, which do you like the best?

BD: Uh... the Band's. Who else did it?

JW: Julie Driscoll... the Byrds did it?

BD: I remember hearing the Julie Driscoll one... I don't remember hearing the Byrds.

JW: What was the origin of that collection of songs, of that tape?

BD: The origin of it? What do you mean?

JW: Where was that done?

BD: Well, that was done out in... out in somebody's basement. Just a basement tape. It was just for...

JW: Did you do most, did you write most of those songs, those demos, for yourself?

BD: Right.

JW: And then decide against them?

BD: No, they weren't demos for myself, they were demos of the songs. I was being *pushed* again... into coming up with some songs. So, you know... you know how these things go.

JW: Do you have any artists in mind for any of those particular songs?

BD: No. They were just fun to do. That's all. They were a kick to do. Fact, I'd do it all again. You know... That's really the way to do a recording – in a peaceful, relaxed setting – in somebody's basement. With the windows open... And a dog lying on the floor. Let me

explain something about this interview. If you give one magazine an interview, then the other magazine wants an interview. If you give one to one, then the other one wants one. So pretty soon, you're in the interview business... You're just giving interviews. Well, as you know, this can really get you down. Doing nothing but giving interviews. So the only way you can do it is to give press conferences. But you see, you have to have something to give a press conference about. Follow me? So that's why I don't give interviews. There's no mysterious reason to it, there's nothing organized behind it... it's just that if you give an interview to one magazine, then another one'll get mad.

JW: Why have you chosen to do this interview?

BD: 'Cause this is a music paper. Why would I want to give an interview to *Look* magazine? Tell me, why?

JW: I don't know... to sell records.

BD: To sell records, I could do it. Right. But I have a gold record without doing it, do you understand me? Well, if I had to sell records, I'd be out there giving interviews to everybody. Don't you see? Mr. Clive Davis, he was president of Columbia Records, and he said he wouldn't be surprised if this last album sold a million units. Without giving one interview. Now you tell me, Jann, why am I going to go out and give an interview?

JW: To get hassled...

BD: Why would I want to go out and get hassled? If they're gonna pay me, I mean... who wants to do that... I don't.

JW: Do you have any idea how much money your publishing has brought in over the last five years?

BD: Well now, that's difficult to answer because my songs are divided up into three, no, four companies. So there you have it. There you have it right there.

JW: Which companies?

BD: Well, I've got songs with Leeds Music. I've got songs with Witmark Music. I've got a bunch of songs with Dwarf Music. I've got songs in Big Sky Music. So you see, my songs are divided up, so...

JW: Do you own Big Sky Music wholly yourself?

BD: It's my company. I chose to start this company.

JW: If you put all the estimated income from those four companies together, or estimated gross income from publishing from those, it must be considerable...

BD: Not as much as the Beatles.

JW: Yeah, but other than the Beatles?

BD: Not as much as those writers from Motown.

JW: Other than the writers from Motown...

BD: You know there are many more musical organizations than me. They've top staffs of writers bringing in more money than you can dream of.

JW: What song writers do you like? Do you like any of the teams like Holland, Dozier, Holland or Hayes and Porter...

BD: Yeah, I do. I know that fellow – what's his name, Isaac Hayes? – he does a real nice song called *The Other Woman*. I believe that's the title to it. It's on his album. I think it's on his new one. I don't believe he wrote it, though.

JW: Otis Redding was playing at the Whiskey A Go Go a coupla years ago. You came in and talked to Otis. What was that all about?

BD: He was gonna do *Just Like A Woman*. I played him a dub of it. I think he mighta cut it for a demo... I don't think he ever recorded it, though. He was a fine man.

JW: Why did you think *Just Like A Woman* would be a good song for him to do.

BD: Well, I didn't necessarily think it was a good song for him to do, but he asked me if I had any material. It just so happened that I had the dubs from my new album. So we went over and played it. I think he took a dub... That was the first and only time I ever met him.

JW: I take it you dug Otis real well. Are there any other soul singers that you dig as much as Otis?

BD: You mean rhythm and blues pop? Well, you know I've always liked Mavis Staples ever since she was a little girl. She's always been my favorite... She's always had my favorite voice.

JW: Have you heard their new *Stax* album?

BD: I heard one of those... The ones they're doing with other people. Yeah, I heard that, that one that Pop Staples did. (Laughs) **It's ridiculous. Oh, Steve Cropper did do a nice song on that album... that he wrote, called *Water*.**

JW: On his own album?

BD: No, not on his own album. On the *Jammed Together* album. I find it interesting seeing... Mr Staples being referred to as "Pop". (Laughter)

JW: Have you heard the Steve Cropper solo album?

BD: Yeah, I heard that too.

JW: Do you like that?

BD: Sure, I've always dug Steve Cropper... his guitar playing. Ever since the first Booker T. record. I heard that back in the Midwest. Yeah, everybody was playing like him.

JW: What records of Otis' did you dig?

BD: I've got one that contained that song where he was born in a tent by the river – (hums and sings) ***A Change Is Gonna Come*. Yeah, I like that one.**

JW: What is your day-to-day life like?

BD: Hmm... there's no way I could explain that to you, Jann. Every day is different. Depends on what I'm doing.

JW: Do you paint a lot?

BD: Well, I may be fiddling around with the car or I may be painting a boat, or... possibly washing the windows. I just do what has to be done. I play a lot of music, when there's a call in... I'm always trying to put shows together, which never come about. I don't know what it is, but sometimes we get together and I say, "Okay, let's take six songs and do 'em in, let's say, forty minutes"... We got 'em in, let's say forty minutes... We got a stopwatch timing 'em. But I mean nothing happens to it. We could do anything with it, but I mean... Boy, I hurried... I hurried for a long time. I'm sorry I did. All the time, you're hurrying, you're not really aware as you should be. You're trying to make things happen instead of just letting it happen. You follow me?

JW: That's the awkwardness of this interview.

BD: Well, I don't find anything awkward about it. I think it's going great.

JW: The purpose of any interview is to let the person who's being interviewed unload his head.

BD: Well, that's what I'm doing.

JW: And trying to draw that out is...

BD: Boy, that's a good... That'd be a great title for a song. Unload my head. Going down to the store... going down to the corner to unload my head. I'm gonna write that up when I get back. (Laughter) **Going to Tallahassee to unload my head.**

JW: What do you think can happen with your career as a singer?

BD: What are the possibilities?

JW: Go on the road, continue to make records... For instance, do you foresee continuing to make records?

BD: If they're enjoyable. I'm going to have to receive a certain amount of enjoyment out of my work pretty soon. I'd like to keep a little closer to the studios than I am now. It's awful hard for me to make records when I've got to go four thousand miles away, you know? Like I say, when you do have these companies around who're just there to serve...

JW: Are you thinking of moving to Nashville? I mean that would be...

BD: Well, if I moved to Nashville, I'd still have to book studio time, wouldn't I?

JW: But still, you'd have the accessibility of the session men and the engineers...

BD: That's true. But I'd have to do everything with that same sound, wouldn't I? I couldn't really use a variety of techniques.

JW: Can you see a time when you would stop making records?

BD: Well, let's put it this way: making a record isn't any more than just recording a song, for me. Well, that's what it's been up till now. Not necessarily going into the studio for any other reason than to record a song. So, If I were to stop writing songs I would stop recording. Or let's say If I was to stop singing I guess I would stop recording. But I don't foresee that. I'll be recording 'cause that's a way for me to unload my head

JW: You said in one of your songs on *Highway 61*... "I need a dump truck, mama, to unload my head". Do you still need a dump truck or something? (Laughter)

BD: What album was that?

JW: It was on *Highway 61*. What I'm trying to ask is what are the changes that have gone on between the time you did *Highway 61* and *Nashville Skyline* or *John Wesley Harding*?

BD: The changes. I don't think I know exactly what you mean.

JW: How has life changed for you? Your approach to... your view of what you do...

BD: Not much. I'm still the same person. I'm still uh... going at in the same old way. Doing the same old thing.

JW: Do you think you've settled down, and slowed down?

BD: I hope so. I was going at a tremendous speed... at the time of my *Blonde on Blonde* album, I was going at a tremendous speed.

JW: How did you make the change? The motorcycle accident?

BD: I just took what came. That's how I made the changes. I took what came.

JW: What do they come from?

BD: What was what coming from? Well, they come from the same sources that everybody else's do. I don't know if it comes from within oneself anymore than it comes from without oneself. Or outside of oneself. Don't you see what I mean? Maybe the inside and the outside are both the same. I don't know. But, I feel it just like everyone else. What's that old line – there's a line from one of those old songs out... "I can recognize it in others, I can feel it in myself." You can't say that's from the inside or the outside, it's like both.

JW: What people do you think from the outside have influenced a change?

BD: Uh... what change are you talking about?

JW: The change from *Highway 61* to *Nashville Skyline*...

BD: I'm not probably as aware of that change as you are, because I haven't listened to that album *Highway 61*... I'd probably do myself a lot of good going back and listening to it. I'm not aware of that change. I probably could pinpoint it right down if I heard that album but I haven't heard it for quite a while.

JW: Are there any old albums that you do listen to?

BD: Well, I don't sit around and listen to my records, if that's what you mean.

JW: Like picking up a high school yearbook, and just...

BD: Oh, I love to do that... Every once in a while. That's the way I listen to my records – every once in a while. Every once in a while I say "Well, I'd like to see that fellow again."

JW: Are there any albums or tracks from the albums that you think now were particularly good?

BD: On any of my old albums? Uh... As songs or performances?

JW: Songs.

BD: Oh yeah, quite a few.

JW: Which ones?

BD: Well, if I was performing now... If I was making personal appearances, you would know which ones, because I would play them. You know? But I don't know which ones I'd play now. I'd have to pick and choose. Certainly couldn't play 'em all.

JW: Thinking about the titles on *Bringing It All Back Home*.

BD: I like *Maggi'es Farm*. I always liked *Highway 61 Revisited*. I always liked that song. *Mr Tambourine Man* and *Blowin' In The Wind* and *Girl From The North Country* and *Boots Of Spanish Leather* and *The Times They Are A-Changin'*... I liked *Ramona*...

JW: Where did you write *Desolation Row*? Where were you when you wrote that?

BD: I was in the back of a taxi-cab.

JW: In New York?

BD: Yeah.

JW: During the period where you were recording songs with a rock and roll accompaniment, with a full-scale electric band, of those rock and roll songs that you did, which do you like?

BD: The best rock and roll songs... which ones are there?

JW: Uh... *Like A Rolling Stone*...

BD: Yeah, I probably liked that the best.

JW: And that was the Tom Wilson record... how come you never worked with that collection of musicians again

BD: Well, Michael Bloomfield, he was touring with Paul Butterfield at that time... And I could only get 'em when I could. So I wouldn't wait on Michael Bloomfield to make my records. He sure does play good, though. I missed having him there, but what could you do?

JW: In talking about the songs as performance, which of the performances that you did, that were recorded...

BD: I like *Like A Rolling Stone*... I can hear it now, now that you've mentioned it. I like that sound. You mean, which recorded performances?

JW: Yeah, I mean in your performance of the song...

BD: Oh... I like some of them on the last record, but I don't know, I tend to close up in the studio. After I've... I could never get enough presence on me. Never really did sound like me, to me.

JW: On *Nashville Skyline* you see a lot of echoing and a lot of limiting. What made you decide to alter your voice technically and use those kind of studio tricks? Rather than doing it more or less flat?

BD: Well, how would you have liked it better? Would you have liked it flat?

JW: I dig the echo.

BD: I do too. I dig the echo myself. That's why we did it that way. The old records do sound flat. I mean there's just a flatness to them, they're like two-dimensional. Isn't that right? Well in this day and age, there's no reason to make records like that.

JW: *Nashville Skyline Rag* – was that a jam that took place in a studio or did you write the lyrics before?

BD: Umm... I had that little melody quite a while before I recorded it.

JW: There's a cat named Alan Weberman who writes in the *East Village Other*. He calls himself the world's leading Dylanologist. You know him?

BD: No... Oh, yes, I did. Is this the guy who tears up all my songs? Well, he oughta take a rest. He's way off. I saw something he wrote about *All Along The Watchtower* and boy, let me tell you, this boy's off. Not only did he create some type of fantasy – he had Allen Ginsberg in there – he couldn't even hear the words to the song right. He didn't hear the song right. Can you believe that? I mean this fellow couldn't hear the words... or something. I bet he's a hard working fellow, though. I bet he really does a good job if he could find something to do but it's too bad it's just my songs, 'cause I don't know really if there's enough material in my songs to sustain someone who is really out to do a big job. You understand what I mean? I mean a fellow like that would be much better off writing about Tolstoy, or Dostoevsky, or Freud... Doing a really big analysis of somebody who has countless volumes of writings. But here's me, just a few records out. Somebody devoting so much time to those few records, when there's such a wealth of

material that hasn't even been touched yet, or hasn't even been heard or read... that escapes me. Does it escape you? I understand putting time into it, but I read this, in this *East Village Other*. I read it... and it was clever. And I got a kick out of reading it (laughter) **on some level, but I didn't want to think anybody was taking it too seriously. You follow me?**

JW: He's just representative of thousands of people who do take it seriously.

BD: Well, that's their own business. Why don't I put it that way: that's their business and his business. But... I'm the source of that and I don't know if it's my business or not, but I'm the source of it. You understand? So I see it a little differently than all of them do.

JW: People in your audience, they obviously take it very seriously, and they look to you for something...

BD: Well, I wouldn't be where I am today without them. So, I owe them... my music, which I would be playing for them.

JW: Does the intensity of some of the response annoy you?

BD: No, no, I rather enjoy it.

JW: I'm trying to get back to the thing about being a symbol of youth culture... What're your opinions or thoughts on that? At some point you pick up the paper or the magazine and find out that this is happening and you know that you're considered like this. That people are watching you for that... And you've got to say to yourself, "Am I hung-up?"

BD: Well, not any more than anybody else is who performs in public. I mean, everyone has his following.

JW: What do you think your following is like?

BD: Well, I think there are all kinds... I imagine they're... You would probably know just about as much about that as I would. You know, they're all kinds of people. I remember when I used to do concerts, you couldn't pin 'em down. All the road managers and the sound equipment carriers and even the truck drivers would notice how different the audiences were, in terms of individual people. How different they... like sometimes I might have a concert and all the same kind of people show up, I mean, what does that mean?

JW: Did you vote for president?

BD: We got down to the polls too late. (Laughter)

JW: People are always asking about what does this song mean and what does that song mean, and a lot of them seem to be based on some real person, just like any kind of fiction, you expect... Are there any songs that you can relate to particular people, as having inspired the song?

BD: Not now I can't.

JW: What do you tell somebody who asks: "What is *Leopard-Skin Pillbox Hat* about?"

BD: It's just about that. I think that's something I mighta taken out of the newspaper. Mighta seen a picture of one in a department store window. There's really no more to it than that. I know it can get blown up into some kind of illusion. But in reality it's no more than that. Just a leopard skin pillbox. That's all.

JW: How did you come in contact with the Band?

BD: Well. There used to be this young lady that worked up at Al Grossman's office – her name was Mary Martin, she's from Canada. And she was a rather persevering soul, as she hurried around the office on her job. She was a secretary, did the secretarial work, and knew all the bands and all the singers from Canada. She was from Canada. Anyway, I needed a group to play electric songs.

JW: Where did you hear them play?

BD: Oh, I never did hear them play. I think the group I wanted was Jim Burton and Joe Osborne to play bass, and Mickey Jones. I knew Mickey Jones, he was playing with Johnny Rivers. They were all in California, though. And there was some difficulty in making that group connect. One of them didn't want to fly and Mickey couldn't make it immediately and I think Jim Burton was playing with a television group at that time.

JW: He used to play with Ricky Nelson?

BD: Oh, I think this was after that. He was playing with a group called the Shindogs and they were on television. So he was doing that job. Anyway, that was the way it stood and Mary Martin kept pushing this group who were out in New Jersey – I think they were in Elizabeth, New Jersey, or Hartford, Connecticut, or some town close to New York. She was pushing them and she had two of the fellows come up to the office so we could meet. And it was no more... No more, no less. I just asked them if they could do it and they said they could. (Laughs) **These two said they could. And that was how it started. Easy enough, you know.**

JW: How come you never made an album with them?

BD: We tried. We cut a couple of sides in the old New York Columbia studios. We cut two or three and right after *Positively Fourth Street*, we cut some singles and they didn't really get off the ground. You oughta hear 'em. You know, you could find 'em. They didn't get off the ground. They didn't even make it on the charts. Consequently, I've not been back on the charts since the singles. I never did much care for singles 'cause you have to pay so much attention to them. Unless you make your whole album full of singles. You have to make them separately. So I didn't really think about them too much that way. But playing with the Band was a natural thing. We have a real different sound. Real different. But it wasn't like anything heard. I heard one of the records recently... It was on a jukebox. *Please Crawl Out Your Window*.

JW: That was one of them? What were the others?

BD: There were some more songs out of that same session... *Sooner Or Later* – that was on *Blonde On Blonde*. That's one of my favorite songs.

JW: What role did you play in the *Big Pink* album, the album they made by themselves?

BD: Well, I didn't do anything on that album. They did that with John Simon.

JW: Did you play piano on it or anything?

BD: No.

JW: What kind of sound did you hear when you went in to make *John Wesley Harding*

BD: I heard the sound that Gordon Lightfoot was getting, with Charlie McCoy and Kenny Buttrey. I'd used Charlie and Kenny both before, and I figured if he could get that sound, I could. But we couldn't get it. (Laughs) **It was an attempt to get it, but it didn't come off. We got a different sound... I don't know what you'd call that... It's a muffled sound. There used to be a lot of friction in the control booth, on these records I used to make. I didn't know about it, I wasn't aware of them until recently. Somebody would want to put limiters on this and somebody would want to put an echo on that, someone else would have some other idea. And myself, I don't know anything about any of this. So I just have to leave it up in the air. In someone else's hands.**

JW: The friction was between the engineer and the producer...

BD: No, the managers and the advisers and the agents.

JW: Do you usually have sessions at which all these people are there or do you prefer to close them up?

BD: Well, sometimes there's a whole lot of people. Sometimes you can't even move there's so many people... Other times, there's no one. Just the musicians.

JW: Which is more comfortable for you?

BD: Well, it's much more comfortable when there's... Oh, I don't know, I could have it both ways. Depends what kind of song I'm gonna do. I might do a song where I want all those people around. Then I do another song and have to shut the lights off, you know?

JW: Was *Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands* originally planned as a whole side?

BD: That song is an example of a song... it started out as just a little thing, *Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands*, but I got carried away, somewhere along the line. I just sat down at a table and started writing. At the session itself. And I just got carried away with the whole thing... I just started writing and I couldn't stop. After a period of time, I forgot what it was all about, and I started trying to get back to the beginning. (Laughs) **Yeah.**

JW: Did you plan to go down and make a double record set?

BD: No. Those things just happen when you have the material.

JW: Do you like that album?

BD: *Blonde On Blonde*? Yeah. But like I always think that a double set could be made into a single album. But I dig *Blonde on Blonde* and the Beatles thing. They are like huge collections of songs. But a real great record can usually be compacted down... Although the Beatles have that album, and *Blonde On Blonde*... I'm glad that there's two sides, that there's that much...

JW: How long did that take to record?

BD: *Blonde On Blonde*? Well I cut it in between. I was touring and I was doing it whenever I got a chance to get into the studio. So it was in the works for a while. I could only do maybe two or three songs at a time.

JW: How long did *John Wesley Harding* take?

BD: You mean how many sessions? That took three sessions, but we did them in a month. The first two sessions were maybe three weeks to a month apart, and the second one was about two weeks from the third.

JW: *John Wesley Harding* – why did you call the album that?

BD: We... I called it that because I had that song *John Wesley Harding*. It didn't mean anything to me. I called it that, Jann, 'cause I had the song *John Wesley Harding*, which started out to be a long ballad. I was gonna write a ballad on... Like maybe one of those old cowboy... You know, a real long ballad. But in the middle of the second verse, I got tired. I had a tune, and I didn't want to waste the tune, it was a nice little melody, so I just wrote a quick third verse, and I recorded that. But it was a silly little song (laughs)... **I mean, it's not a commercial song, in any kind of sense. At least, I don't think it is. It was the one song on the album which didn't seem to fit in. And I had it placed here and there, and I didn't know what I was gonna call the album anyway. No one else had any ideas either. I placed it last and I placed it in the middle somewhere, but it didn't seem to work. So somehow that idea came up to just put it first and get done with it right away, and that way when it comes up, no one'll... You know, if someone's listening to All Along The Watchtower and that comes up and they'll say "Wow, what's that?"** (Laughs)

JW: You knew that cowboy...

BD: I knew people were gonna be brought down when they heard that and say "Wow, what's that?" You know, a lot of people said that to me, but I knew it in front. I knew people were gonna listen to that song and say that they didn't understand what was going on, but they would've singled that song out later, if we hadn't called the album *John Wesley Harding* and placed so much importance on that, for people to start wondering about it... If that hadn't been done, that song would've come up and people would have said it was a throwaway song. It would have probably got in the way of some other songs. See, I try very hard to stop my songs from interfering with each other. That's all I'm trying to do. Place 'em all out on the disc. Sometimes it's really annoying to me when I listen to all these dubs. I listen to one and then I put on another one and the one I heard before is still on my mind. I'm trying to keep away from that.

JW: Why did you choose the name of the outlaw *John Wesley Harding*?

BD: Well, it fits in the tempo. Fits right in the tempo. Just what I had at hand.

JW: What other titles did you have for the album?

BD: Not for that one. That was the only title that come up for that one. But for the *Nashville Skyline* one, the title came up *John Wesley Harding, Volume II*. We were gonna do that... The record company wanted to call the album *Love Is All There Is*. I didn't see anything wrong with it, but it sounded a little spooky to me...

JW: What about *Blonde On Blonde*?

BD: Well, that title came up when... I don't even recall how exactly it came up, but I do know it was all in good faith. It has to do with just the word. I don't know who thought of that. I certainly didn't.

JW: Of all the albums as albums, excluding your recent ones, which one do you think was the most successful in what it was trying to do? Which was the most fully realized, for you?

BD: I think the second one. The second album I made.

JW: Why?

BD: Well, I got a chance to... I felt real good about doing an album with my own material. My own material and I picked a little on it, picked the guitar and it was a big Gibson -I felt real accomplished on that. *Don't Think Twice*. Got a chance to do some of that. Got a chance to play in open tuning... *Oxford Town*, I believe that's on the album. That's open tuning. I got a chance to do talking blues. I got a chance to do ballads, like *Girl From The North Country*. It's just because it had more variety. I felt good at that.

JW: Of the electric ones, which do you prefer?

BD: Well, sound-wise, I prefer this last one. 'Cause it's got the sound. See, I'm listening for sound now.

JW: As a collection of songs?

BD: Songs? Well, this last album maybe means more to me, 'cause I did undertake something. In a certain sense. And... There's a certain pride in that.

JW: It was more premeditated than the others? I mean, you knew what you were gonna go after?

BD: Right.

JW: Where did the name *Nashville Skyline*...

BD: Well, I always like to tie the name of the album in with some song. Or if not some song, some kind of general feeling. I think that just about fit because it was less in the way, and less specific than any of the other ones there. Certainly couldn't call the album *Lay Lady Lay*. I wouldn't have wanted to call it that, although that name was brought up. It didn't get my vote, but it was brought up. *Peggy Day – Lay Peggy Day*, that was brought up. A lot of things were brought up. *Tonight I'll Be Staying Here With Peggy Day*. That's another one. Some of the names just didn't seem to fit. *Girl From The North Country*. That was another title which didn't really seem to fit. Picture me on the front holding a guitar and *Girl From The North Country* printed on top. (Laughs) ***Tell Me That It Isn't Peggy Day*. I don't know who thought of that one.**

JW: What general thing was happening that made you want to start working with the Band, rather than working solo?

BD: I only worked solo because there wasn't much going on. There wasn't. There were established people around... Yeah, the Four Seasons... There were quite a few other established acts. But I worked alone because it was easier to. Plus, everyone else I knew was working alone, writing and singing. There wasn't much opportunity for groups or bands then; there wasn't. You know that.

JW: When did you decide to get one together, like that? You played at Forest Hills, that was where you first appeared with a band? Why did you feel the time had come?

BD: To do what? Well, because I could pay a backing group now. See I didn't want to use a backing group unless I could pay them.

JW: Do you ever get a chance to work frequently with the Band? In the country?

BD: Work? Well, work is something else. Sure, we're always running over old material. We're always playing, running over old material. Testing out this and that.

JW: What do you see yourself as – a poet, a singer, a rock and roll star, married man...

BD: All of those. I see myself as it all. Married man, poet, singer, songwriter, custodian, gatekeeper... All of it. I'll be it all. I feel "confined" when I have to choose one or the other. Don't you?

JW: You're obligated to do one album a year?

BD: Yes.

JW: Is that all you want to do?

BD: No. I'd like to do more. I would do dozens of them if I could be near the studio. I've been just lazy, Jann. I've been just getting by, so I haven't really thought too much about putting out anything really new and different.

JW: You've heard the Joan Baez album of all your songs...

BD: Yeah, I did... I generally like everything she does.

JW: Are there any particular artists that you like to see do your songs?

BD: Yeah, Elvis Presley. I liked Elvis Presley... Elvis Presley recorded a song of mine. That's the one recording I treasure the most... It was called *Tomorrow Is A Long Time*. I wrote it but never recorded it.

JW: Which album is that on?

BD: *Kismet*.

JW: I'm not familiar with it at all.

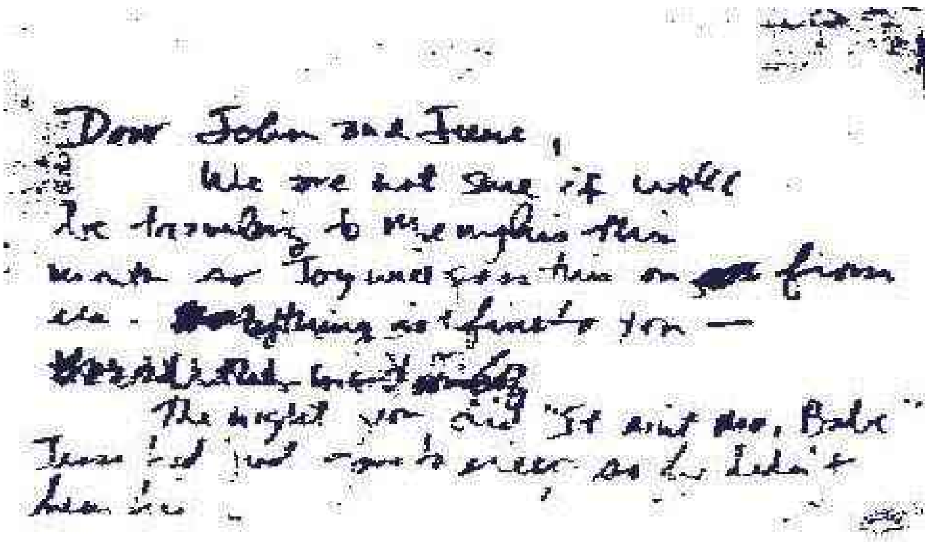
BD: He did it with just guitar.

1970(?)
Dylan's unfinished letter to John & June Cash

Source: Apparently stolen from Dylan's garbage by A.J. Weberman

xxxx – illegible

Dear John and June,
We are not sure if we'll
be traveling to Memphis this
month so xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx from
us. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
The night you did "It Ain't Me Babe"
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxx



1970
Michelle Enghien Interview, Paris, France

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1025-1026.

This item appears in the *Wicked Messenger* item 298 of October 7, 1986 with the comment – this "comes from an unknown and undated English language magazine". It would seem, judging from the style, that the interview was originally published in French and that the following is a 'good-as-possible' translation back into English. I have no further details about the interview, at present.

DYLAN – 'I'M A NEW MAN'

BOB DYLAN – RARELY INTERVIEWED – TALKS TO MICHELLE ENGHIEN OF THE FRENCH POP WEEKLY SUPER HEBDO POP MUSIC.

ME: Why such long silence?

BD: (Laughs and replies with a long silence)**.**

ME: Why do you go for months and months without making any personal appearances without giving any sign of life as if you'd disappeared off the face of the earth?

BD: I believe that at certain periods in a persons existence it is necessary, if not vital, to bring about a change in your life so as not to go under. I felt that I needed to stop in order to find something new, in order to create – and then again I wanted to live part of my life without being continually disturbed for no valid reason. I have children and I want to watch them grow up – to get to know them, and for them to get to know me and know that I'm their father.

ME: You spoke about creating, and it seems that what you are doing now is different from the last record you did before you withdrew from the scene, "*Lay, Lady, Lay*". And yet I have the impression that you haven't really changed since "*I Want You*". Why?

BD: First of all I want to say that I did not withdraw after that record, and secondly that I realised that people preferred what I was doing before. That's why I reverted to my earlier style. Nevertheless my last LP is not in the style of "*I Want You*". I use the harmonica a lot less.

ME: What is the innovation?

BD: There isn't an innovation as such – except for the meeting with Al Kooper for the next LP.

ME: Why did you decide to work with Al Kooper?

BD: I knew Al Kooper before I worked with him and I appreciated him as a musician. One day we met in the home of a mutual friend where we spent the weekend, and we had fun playing together – it was amusing and interesting. So, why not try it?

ME: Will you continue to work together?

BD: I don't know. But why not? Others split up – me, I do the reverse – I find you learn more that way.

ME: Many journalists and writers predict that the revolution, in all its forms, will come in America, especially through the medium of music and its exponents; yet the music seems far less committed, less valid today than it was two years ago.

BD: I don't really think there'll be a revolution, but possibly just simply an evolution of the music. The possibilities in America are so vast. I think that there is very little good music around in relation to the large number of groups which exist in the USA. But the blame lies with the men who employ the groups; these men are pretty well incapable of distinguishing between good and bad musicians. They run around all over the country and as soon as they hear something which they think might bring them in some bread, they buy the group, throw them onto the market, make them a success – without

stopping to see if there is anything behind them, or to ask if they are ready to make a career in music.

It's for this reason that there are so many lousy records; sooner or later you have to sort out the wheat from the chaff- and that is an evolution of the spirit.

ME: How do you think you differ as a man today from what you were a year ago?

BD: I'm a new man with a number of new projects, a great deal of work to do and very happy to be living and to be able to express myself in the way I do. I feel freer than before. In short, I'm a musician through and through.

ME: When do you plan to come back to Europe?

BD: I don't know exactly, nothing is definitely fixed at present – and I don't want to leave my children. But perhaps I'll come over with them next spring.

January 1971
Weberman Telephone Conversations, New York City, NY

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 137-162.

Alan J. Weberman, a former devoted fan, by now an ex-fan disillusioned with the new-style Dylan, has visions of converting Dylan back to his former protest ways. A. J. is now the self-styled leader of the Dylan Liberation Front and by the time of this interview has already published his "garbage" article – an attempt at interpreting Dylan, the man, by analyzing the contents of his garbage can.

The following occurred in January 1971. Initially, the Dylan vs. Weberman confrontation took place outside Dylan's Greenwich Village apartment during a demonstration organized by Weberman. The next day Dylan rang Weberman and invited him to his studio to listen to some session recordings and to continue the discussion. It is clear that Dylan wanted to exercise some control over AJ. 's activities. Weberman had other ideas, using both meetings to construct an article for publication in the underground press. Unhappy with Weberman's plans Dylan makes his first telephone call on January 6th and asks to see a copy of the intended article before publication. Having perused a draft of the said article Dylan again phoned Weberman on January 9th for a much longer call, attempting to get the article modified to his liking.

These conversations, taped by Weberman, appeared in edited form on a Folkways record in 1977 by the title Bob Dylan vs. A. J. Weberman. This was hastily withdrawn for legal reasons: Dylan sued and settled out of court. They were also released in fuller form in 1985 on the bootleg album Robert Zimmerman vs. A. J. Weberman (The Historic Confrontation). The following has been taken directly from the circulating tape containing the full discussions.

The next article (see page 163) is Weberman's actual publication as it appeared in the East Village Other and a comparison of the two will show exactly how Weberman modified his draft in response to Dylan's demands.

FIRST PHONE CALL

BD: Uh, you called Naomi?

AW: Yeah.

BD: Told her about some tape. What tape was that?

AW: No I didn't say... any tape. What I did was I typed out my recollections of our conversation together, and I'm gonna use it as an interview. I'm gonna send it out to every underground paper in America for free rather than selling it to...

BD: You didn't tell me there was an interview.

AW: Ah well, didn't you, like, uh, didn't you...

BD: Hey man, you wanna have an interview with me – let me know. I'll give you the interview. Don't take uh...

AW: Okay, okay, okay, fine. I was gonna let you see it beforehand and... er, 'cause I realized that, you know, it wasn't taped and I don't wanna misquote you – put words in your mouth.

BD: Well, what about the tape? You had a tape in your jacket?

AW: No, no tape. I didn't have a tape in my jacket. I don't have the money for one of those concealed tape recorders... Uh, so I just typed up, uh...

BD: Okay, look, man, you wanna have an interview... You know, have an interview, but don't uh...

AW: Yeah.
BD: You know, that's sneaky shit, man.
AW: What kinda sneaky shit, man?
BD: I mean you come and talk to somebody and type it up, right?
AW: But you know I'm a cat who writes about, who specializes in writing about you.
BD: Yeah man, I understand that, but uh, you know, if you wanna have an interview, we can have an interview above the table, you know, and, uh, you know, just keep it on top of the table. That's all I'm talkin' about. I mean, I think that I deserve that right.
AW: Sure, sure, that's fine with me. I'd prefer it that way, you know. That would even make it better, although this isn't bad. What I have here is really...
BD: I would like to see it anyway. Can you bring it around?
AW: Yeah, I will.
BD: Like, uh, well...
AW: Should I bring it around now, or...?
BD: No, no, I'm tied up the weekend. How about, like, on Monday or Tuesday?
AW: Ah... see the trouble is that these people are expecting ah... these people are expecting ah... expecting something from me Monday. All right...
BD: I'm workin' man. Like I'm buildin' some shit, you know? And I really gotta get it built. Just, you know, some tables and some shelves and some stuff, an' I gotta get it done, man, I put it way off.
AW: Uh... Okay. I'll tell 'em that they'll have to wait.
BD: Just like, one week, or a day or two. Two days, just let me see it.
AW: Okay, let me bring it over today. I'll just leave it in your mailbox, okay? And then you can...
BD: Well I'll be there. I'll be at the studio today, so bring it by and give it to me, but I can't read it...
AW: Okay.
BD: I'll be able to do that. And then I'll call you back.
AW: Okay, groovy.
BD: All right, bye-bye.
AW: Okay, so long.

<u>SECOND PHONE CALL</u>

AW: You rang?
BD: Yeah, and you know you asked me about corrections, and all that? I noticed that you just had a big pile of 'em in your hand, you know, an' I was wond'rin' like, if you're fuckin' around with me, like er... you know.
AW: Wait, wait, wait, wait. What're you sayin' man?
BD: ...like you had a big pile of 'em in your hand, man. You obviously had a whole lot printed up. So, I mean like...
AW: No, no, I had the concordance. I had two, I had two xeroxes made. It cost me a dollar four cents. I had two xeroxes of this made.
BD: Okay, like there's a couple of things into that article man...
AW: Let me tell you how, yeah...
BD: ...That I kind of object to.
AW: What? What?
BD: Ah, one thing there about Johnny Cash, man. I don't think that's right. And then there's another thing...
AW: You were saying Johnny Cash is in the past.
BD: Yeah, well I didn't, you didn't – I didn't say it like that man. I didn't quite understand the article, like, like if you said, if you said in the article, you said, "That's past" – that

was the quote. But like, you didn't really make specific whether that pertained to... whether Johnny Cash's y'know, playing for the White House was in the past, or whether I was digging Johnny Cash, whether that was in the past... the whole thing was kinda vague, man. I didn't want... you know I didn't want it printed that I didn't dig Johnny Cash, man, because I do.

AW: Okay, okay. I'll say... you know, so I'll put down...

BD: Okay. The other thing was Dear Landlord, man. Like, I couldn't have said that song was written for Grossman.

AW: No, you told me that. You said it was for Al Grossman. I remember that specifically. I said it's... oh, he's giving me the...

BD: Well, man, like it wasn't all the way for Al Grossman. In fact, he wasn't even in my mind. Only later man, only later when people pointed it out to me that the song might've been written for Al Grossman, I thought well, maybe it could've been.

AW: That's a good story to use, you know, you're just puttin' me on, man, you're givin' me the, uh...

BD: No, I'm not puttin' you on.

AW: ...the usual line, man.

BD: No, I don't want you to print that that was in for Grossman, because it wasn't.

AW: Who should I say...?

BD: It wasn't written for anybody, man, it's an abstract song. It sure as hell wasn't written for you!

AW: It wasn't?

BD: It sure as hell wasn't, no. I was not even aware of you at that time.

AW: Isn't landlord 'critic' though, in your symbolism?

BD: No man, like I wasn't aware of you at that time.

AW: Right, right, that's how I... that's... yeah.

BD: So I mean, I don't care what you have to figure out what to say, but it was not written for Grossman, so don't say it. I mean, you know, it's just not right.

AW: How about if I make it, like, sarcas...

BD: The other thing, man, it's like there's some lies in there, man, – there's some lies in that article, though. I don't have the article with me, but there's some lies in there.

AW: Like what.

BD: Well, I was going to... I had the article. I called you before, man, and you weren't home. I had the article in front of me. I left your article at the studio, but there's some lies in there man – I couldn't believe it.

AW: Want me to read you the article now.

BD: Yeah.

AW: I was really fucking hassled.

BD: No, no, no, it's there's some place round in the, in the like, third, fourth page.

AW: Third or fourth page. One, two, three... "somewhat taken aback by... I told him that all this evidence in your poetry"... So we talked... Dylan said he didn't dig the Panthers because of their position on the Mideastern situation – "little Israel versus all those"... I started to explain how to Dylan, how the Panthers believed that everyone has a right to live: Jews, Arabs and Palestinian refugees, when this kid from my class comes over and says he wants to talk to Dylan. I told him that that was cool but to wait until we got done... I had something important to say to Bob and I didn't know if I'd ever see him again. (I was seizing the time). So the punk says – "You're full of shit and so is Dylanology". So I grabbed him by the collar and screamed SPLIT ASSHOLE! He left but as he was going he yelled out in grade school intonations – WEBERMAN'S BOOTLEGGING *TARANTULA* (Dylan's suppressed novel). Dylan said I only had half of the book – the other half was up in Woodstock – and that I should never worry about running out of things to interpret.

BD: California, man, California.

AW: California?

BD: California, man.

AW: You don't want people rippin' you off, eh?

BD: It's not in Woodstock. That's right. Also I don't want people, you know, up there, asking questions.

AW: Okay, "out in California" okay.

BD: Well, you just do it.

AW: What's the difference? Woodstock, California, it doesn't make, you know, it doesn't affect my thesis one way or the other.
"...that I should never worry about running out of things to interpret. He said he was gonna invite me up to Woodstock a couple of months ago. I asked him "How come you didn't, how come I had to have a demonstration in front of your house to get you to negotiate... you know how dedicated I am and how well I know your work." "I know, Al, and one day we'll go for a ride together and I'll interpret all my poems for ya'." "We ain't goin' by the docks, are we?..." I didn't say that but, you know, what difference does it make?... "No, Al, you scared my kids..."

BD: See, that's another one.

AW: You did say I...

BD: Did I say that, man? Well, it's not true...

AW: You told Carrie I scared your kids, man.

BD: I didn't mean 'scare'. You know what I'm talkin' about? I didn't really mean 'scare', because they weren't really aware and I don't wanna insinuate that...

AW: Sure.

BD: ...but like, I didn't mean that, really. I might've said it, man, but I didn't really mean that. Because my kids aren't really aware of this or that. You know, I said that because, like, it could've been possible, but it wasn't possible. And like, I don't wanna, I don't wanna throw that out, I really don't.

AW: So what shall I put down?

BD: I don't know. But, like, uh... I don't know, but, like...

AW: How about "you shook up my kids"?

BD: No, no, not even my kids. Leave my kids out of it.

AW: Leave your kids out of it?

BD: Because, er, you know... that was me, that was my thing imposed on them, and that was my thing, you know what I mean? So I don't know what you can say, but... anything, I don't... "You shook up my landlord" or "My superintendent" or whatever, I don't know. Well, figure it out, anything. It don't matter. But like, that's not really... that doesn't really speak for me.

AW: Ah... but you did say that though...

BD: If I did say it man, I'm sorry – I shouldn't have said it. You know, I'm sorry to my kids that... I mean, because it's not true, man. Like, it's just I mouthed of, that's all. And I shouldn't have said it for their sake, 'cause it's just not true.

AW: Yeah, the kids didn't look scared really.

BD: No, no, they weren't man, and like, I don't wanna even... y'know, I don't wanna say it. My wife'll fuckin' hit me, man. Like, I don't really wanna get into that.

AW: All right. No, "Al, you scared my kids", you don't like that. "Sorry man. I didn't mean to drag your kids into it, I wouldn't hurt them. They'll be with us soon anyway... "

BD: Will you take that out?

AW: Yeah, I'll take that out. "...dig like these radical freaks were staying over at The Archives and I told them where you were at and they thought about trashing your place but I told them don't do it... it ain't fair to the kids". Ah...

BD: Oh man, take all that shit out, please! Like, I mean, you can leave all the radical stuff in there, you can say it ain't fair to me, but not to the kids, because it's...

AW: Yeah, but, you know... what I was saying at the time is that the only thing that... see, what I'm saying there is the only thing that was preventing me from telling them...

BD: Yeah, well, I made a mistake man – I shouldn't have said it. I mean, it was one of them things that I shouldn't have said. I thought I could use it as a weight.

AW: All right. "Al, I know a lotta people who want to hurt you, especially after that 'Garbage' thing – you know, all these college kids come round to my garbage and take some of it back to their dorms – you wouldn't like these kids either..." "Get a garbage compactor and I'll come round and pick it up once a week." "I don't like machines... No, that's not true."

"Bob, you wouldn't have me offed would you?" "You scared?" "Sure I am, this is an oligarchy, the more money you have, the more power." "I wouldn't do it, Al, don't worry. It's too late anyway." "I didn't think so, man, it would be like GM offing Nader, but if you do, you'd better do a good job."

"I went on and I gave Dylan a rap against Imperialism, Racism and sexism (he didn't seem like he was listening) and then I told him that Nashville Skyline sucked while Self Portrait was a stone rip-off since many people bought it, played it once, and stuck it on their shelf. Neither album related to objective reality. Dylan responded quietly – "Well, there were two good songs on Self Portrait- *Days Of Forty-Nine* and *Copper Kettle*..."

BD: Ah... hey... look, you know you don't have to change this, man, but I'd say there were more than two. I would still say there more than two.

AW: You said there were two.

BD: I did say that there were two but I mean, you know, you don't have to change it, you can leave it like that, but there were more than two.

AW: "...without those two LP's there'd be no New Morning, anyway I'm just starting to get back on my feet as far as my music goes... Al, do you use amphetamine?" "No, man, the reason I have so much energy is because I'm tuned into the life force that's trying to assert itself here on earth – I'm alive man". "Why worry so much about earth when there's..." "What do you want me to do, worry about if Mars invades us?" "What drugs do you use?..."

I found somethin' else in the thing. Uh... you know... first it wasn't me... well, let me finish the paragraph:

"What drugs do you use, Al?" "Just reefer and caffeine – you?" "No drugs." "Bullshit" "Well, so long, Al".

Oh, then I'm gonna put, "No drugs" and I'm gonna put "and it looked true because Dylan's eyes looked normal" and "Bullshit! but I must admit that his eyes looked normal", 'cause I'd made reference to your pupil size in other articles, you know, and I feel I should put that in to be fair.

"Well, so long, Al, you're an interesting fellow, see you in a few weeks." I gave him the power handshake and he split. When I got home I was fucking wasted. I was rapping with Harvey, a lawyer friend, when the phone rang – "Hello Al, this is Bob." Suddenly the phone began to look like my record player. "Want to come over here and visit me tomorrow?" "That's like asking a strung-out junkie if he wants a fix". "Al, I want to thank you for helping me sell a lot of records – your articles have helped me get it, keep it going." "Yeah, that's one aspect of Dylanology I don't dig... I may cancel it out soon." "Al, do you have a driver's license?" "No, never learned to drive." "Too bad, I know of this chauffeur's job that's open." "Are you trying to buy me out? Stop right there. It's im-fucking-possible." "No, I wasn't trying to buy you out, I just wanted you to see life from another seat. You've been on the streets too long." "Hey, Bob, you know that song *Champaign, Illinois* you wrote and gave to Carl Perkins?" "Yeah, I figured Carl needed a song." "He needed something, anyway, why not write a song called *Carbondale, Illinois*, 'cause that's where the pigs just murdered this black man who was gonna testify against them." Dylan remained silent. "You there?" "Call ya tomorrow". I hung up. The next day he called me and told me to come over to his midtown studio with a tape deck and an

amplifier if I wanted to hear some rare Dylan tapes 'cause all he had in the studio was a record player. My old lady, Ann, helped me take the stuff uptown and then split 'cause Dylan said he wanted to see me alone. Dylan began – "I've seen you around a lot, Al." "Bob, let's set up the equipment, okay?" I went over to the speaker and asked him to disconnect it and he started unscrewing the terminal which had no lead on it. "Let me do it, man", and I did the thing. (This little bit of play acting and riff about not having a tape-recorder in his studio was a clever ploy designed to convince me Dylan wasn't into recording conversations, but I didn't go for it and maintained my cool when it came to saying self-incriminating things).

We began – "What do you think of Tim Leary?" Dylan asked. "I think he's great – a revolutionary, etc... a mystical... national hero of Woodstock Nation. What do you think?" "I don't follow politics". "How come I found newspapers in yer garbage..." "Not my garbage... mix all the garbage together"... "your politics... genocidal... a lot of people I talk to say, uh, you know... the Sing Out interview... you support the war in Vietnam". "I only did that to get back at the freaks who wouldn't leave me alone... up in Woodstock... I don't dig the fame thing..."

BD: I don't dig the what? Oh...

AW: Fame thing.

BD: Yeah, okay.

AW: "... freaks find me everywhere." "Get a long-haired wig, they'd never recognize you." "Buy me one". "Cash – That lackey was so conservative at the time you did things together that Nixon later invited him to sing at the White House..."

BD: Okay.

AW: "...and Cash still goes out of his way to praise Nixon's genocidal policies at his concerts". Now what should I say, that's past, or...

BD: No, you could say, uh...

AW: That's what you said.

BD: Well, I think I might have said that for him, but not for me. I might've said that for him, like, but I don't think I should actually say that for him, anyway.

AW: All right, then, what should I say?

BD: You should say, uh, well, uh, "too bad". Ah, well, that ain't good either, man, like what... what the... Well, I don't know what to say, man, so what am I supposed to say? I mean, I'm not gonna...

AW: So what d'you think about Cash? So what do you think about Johnny Cash? He's your friend right?

BD: Well, I can't even answer that, man, I mean, you know, I mean Johnny Cash has been, uh, I've heard Johnny Cash since I was a kid.

AW: Right, but things are changed. In the...

BD: Yeah, but his music hasn't changed, man, I mean I still listen to, uh...

AW: See, I'm not putting Cash down that much, man. I'm saying at the time that, uh, like uh...

BD: I dig him, man.

AW: ...at the time *Nashville Skyline* was coming out...

BD: Hey, that was...

AW: Cash was a more, a very conservative musician. That's why Nixon invited him to the White House. He changed – Cash was going through a change, whether it be motivated by financial, or motivated, you know, just being exposed to, uh... the music people, the way they are today. Uh... he went through some kind of a change, right? So what I'm saying is – at the time, you did things together. I'm not attacking Cash now that he...

BD: Hey, I love him, man. I mean, that's it... that's it. I just don't... I got nothin' else to say.

AW: Okay. "Man, almost all the other rock poets put you down in their songs – in yer own language – for yer politics." "They're just using my phrasing". "No man, they understand what you say... from studying your poetry... Man, if you really believe in yer current bag and want to continue to remain in it, how come you copped out on yourself in your

poetry? And the poetry is simple enough that many people understand it. Isn't that indicative of a contradiction in yer personality?" Now I had Dylan going. He suddenly became very... "This is a composite of two conversations. No, I'm gonna say that, uh, you know... I have a little preface to put that isn't an exact quote, and it's a composite. I didn't do... uh, get to that yet, as I didn't finish the last part plus a little news release about "don't expose me" on, uh, *New Morning*. "Isn't that indicative of a contradiction in yer personality? Now I had..."

BD: What did you just say, man? What does all that have to do... that wasn't in the article.

AW: That's gonna be in the article... this isn't complete, it's about ninety percent complete. What's left is a little thing saying, "this is not Dylan talking, this is my, uh... "

BD: I never said "Don't expose me" in *New Morning*, what's that?

AW: Backwards, backwards. You need to play a part of it backwards.

BD: And it says "Don't expose me"?

AW: Yeah.

BD: Oh fuck, man! Jesus!

AW: It's the same part that, uh, it's the same part that, uh, you did...

BD: Shit, why don't you play an Andy Williams record backwards, man, see what it says.

AW: If you play the whole record backwards, man, it really makes sense in, uh, two places. "When Mars invades us" and, uh... only when you slur the words, you know? "When Mars invades us" and "Ain't no reason to go into town", and that says "Don't expose me" backwards. You know, like, uh...

BD: Jesus!

AW: You know that as well as I do, man 'cause you put it there.

BD: Oh! Oh! Okay. Go ahead, man.

AW: Uh, ha ha. "They're just using my phrasing". "No man. They understand what you're saying the same way I do – from studying your poetry... How come you copped out on yourself in your poetry? And the poetry is simple enough that many people understand it. Isn't that indicative of a contradiction in yer personality. Now I had Dylan going. He suddenly became very depressed and didn't say anything. He looked hurt. I almost felt sorry for him..."

BD: Wh, what's that? What's that all insinua.. what's all that shit, man, you just sort of slipped in?

AW: That was the second day, that other time, the second meeting, man. You just, after I said that, you just sat there and...

BD: I was thinkin' about somethin', man, if I ever just sat there. I mean, I don't...

AW: It's a positive fact, man. When I say somethin', then all of a sudden you go into a fit of depression, man.

BD: No man, I don't go into fits of depression...

AW: Well, I figured maybe I'd said something that hit home.

BD: ...don't have 'em, man, don't have 'em. You can print it man, but it's a lie.

AW: I didn't say you looked... No, that's not true, man. After I said that, you just sat there, and I said "Hey Bob, what's happenin' man?"

BD: Hey man, haven't you ever just sat there?

AW: Not when I'm in a conversation. It's to give you a reaction time man, when they do tests with people, you know, psychological tests, they say, "what do you think of this word"... boy, dog, you know, this, that, you know, and then they come out with a heavily-weighted word – mother's tits – you know. And the guy says, oh you know, something like...

BD: Okay, go ahead, go ahead.

AW: "...I almost felt sorry for him. "Hey Bob, you okay, man?" "Okay. Like, a lot of these cats are full of shit – putting you down for not doing anything when they don't do shit themselves." "Remember, Al, I'm not like them... not fresh out of college..."

BD: I don't get that statement at all.

AW: That doesn't make sense, but that's what you said.

BD: Yeah? I don't get it.

AW: You said, "Remember Al, I'm not like them".

BD: Well, let's just cut it right there – I'm not fresh out of college man, that's just, er...

AW: But you said, you said, "fresh out of college" and the next time, the next day, you said, "Al, all these kids are fresh out of college", and we were talkin' about what you... all right I'll cut that.

BD: I think you put that out of context.

AW: It's dots, there's dots in between it.

BD: Okay.

AW: "Man, you've been telling everyone my interpretations are 'way off... let's hear you interpret one of your songs, then I'll interpret it and we'll see whose interpretation is better... how about *Tonight I'll Be Staying Here With You*?" "Okay, but I feel stupid. *Throw my ticket out the window* – so we going..."

BD: Oh? Stop just for a minute. There was another thing, back there someplace on Rolling Stone. You asked me about Rolling Stone. I think you passed it, I don't think you read it.

AW: I didn't get to that yet.

BD: Oh, you didn't get to it, okay. I'm sorry.

AW: "Let's hear you..." "Okay, but I feel stupid... *Throw my ticket out the window*... so we were down in Nashville and the train was leaving and I didn't want to go so I said..." "Hey, man, didn't you once sing '*You hand in your money*' for the line '*You hand in your ticket*' at a concert in England?" "Yeah". "So doesn't ticket symbolize money?" "A ticket is anything you want it to be". "You mean your symbolism isn't consistent?" "It's as consistent as me." "So isn't it money?" "It could be". Dylan then changed the subject – "You sure you didn't write me letters about my race?" "No man. How many times do I have to tell you... like every letter I wrote was on Dylan Archives stationery – was that?" "Yes, I got it right here." He couldn't find it. "Did you ever write any songs to me?" "Absolutely not". "How about *Dear Landlord*... "

BD: I guess they know about that...

AW: "It wasn't written to Grossman as many people think..." "You see, I wanna get into where you said, "Grossman used to speak for me". I wanted to get that in there."

BD: Yeah, but that wasn't about *Dear Landlord*. That was about something else!

AW: All right. So I'll say so, okay I'll say that, okay, I'll say...

BD: He used to act on my behalf.

AW: Even if it wasn't about you, I didn't know, I didn't know, uh...

BD: Didn't know who you... I wasn't aware of you then.

AW: Right – "I wasn't aware of you then" – okay. "Throughout our conversation the phone rang constantly, and at one point someone came to the door and handed Dylan a fan letter and a book of poems. He read the fan letter right then and there and handed me the book – "Take a look at it – tell me what you think – advise me – you're a knowledgeable cat and I could use some advice – even on politics". "Bullshit". "I should have a book of my poems out in two years and a book containing all my songs should be out soon and I'm planning to release that song you have a rare tape of – *She's Your Lover Now* – as a single". "Bullshit..."

BD: That's true, man!

AW: I say it's bullshit – we'll see when it happens, man.

BD: Okay.

AW: "... What do you think about my work, man". "Your approach is sincere". Hang on for a second, Bob, I wanna turn the cassette over.

BD: You got this whole thing on tape, huh?

AW: Uh...

BD: I can't believe you Weberman. I just can't believe you.

AW: Well, I'm not... I didn't... look, I can't do anything with it man, right? I can't do anything with it, so...

BD: So you got the whole thing on tape, huh?

AW: No I don't, just a part of it. The tape machine fucked up.

BD: What part did you get?

AW: I don't know. I don't know.

BD: So are you gonna play this for your class?

AW: No, I'm...

BD: I ain't never gonna call you again, man. Never, ever fucking again.

AW: No. I'm not gonna play it to my class. I'm not gonna play it to my class, man. I'm gonna, you know... "And then I began to tell Bob why I feel the way I do about Third World liberation. I went into a riff about my visit with a very poor cat in Mexico. "Let's write a song together about your trip and we'll split the royalties". "Send my cut to Caesar Chavez, man". No, that's not true, I didn't say that, but, you know, that's how I feel now. "So you just tell me what happened to you and I'll do the writing". "I was down in Progresso in Yucatan, and I stayed with this laborer, a typical Third World scene, poverty, famine, disease, like being born into a nightmare, prolonged death agony – anyway the cat became a 'bracero', a migrant farm worker so that he wouldn't starve to death – bracero rhymes with sombrero. And this cat thought the communists were 'little people' – he was brainwashed -his pad was next to a garbage dump. Now we got to convince Americans, through this song, that they should support wars of national liberation". Dylan came up with a song that went like this – "Down in Progresso, a brac..."

I don't know, this is, you know... "A bracero lived in a sombrero full of espresso". You know, how's that?

BD: Yeah, that's all right.

AW: "What the fuck is this, man? No one is ever gonna be convinced of anything when you write that abstractly." "That's my thing, Al. Know anything about the other books being written about me?" "Well, Robert Shelton, Tony Scaduto and Toby Thompson are doing books. I know Tony. He says he's goin' around talkin' to all yer friends, Jack Elliott, the McKenzies, etc., and yer old lovers, Suzie Rotolo, Joanie Baez, collecting information about you. He said he would have studied yer lyrics but he knew he couldn't get permission to reprint them". "That's not the reason – he could have never figured them out – he'll only come up with rumors." "He did a pretty good job though. Man, I think you're a fucking reactionary. You don't use your influence to save lives. Man, look at all the death around us. Look what just happened in Pakistan – that was the result of capitalism – the people were so poor they couldn't cope with a natural disaster." "I wonder why the good Lord wanted all those people to die?" "You don't..." "I do..." "But how about *With God On Our Side*?" "I wasn't thinking then".

BD: Ah... I don't think I said that. I think you made that up.

AW: I said... I made up "how about *With God On Our Side"* – I said, "How about that interview back in '64 with Mr Jones of *Melody Maker* magazine is what I said you know, but I didn't, uh, but I figured that it would be better. More people would be hip to *With God On Our Side*, you know. But you did say, "I wasn't thinking then". In other words I didn't say... I said, "How about that; what you said to Mr Jones is supposed to be very esoteric".

BD: Uh... let's see, well...

AW: But that's what you said, man. "I wasn't thinking then". So what should I say? So what do you want me — I'll change it, you know.

BD: Yeah, I don't know what you should change it to, but, uh I didn't, uh, I don't remember saying that in that context.

AW: So what should I change it to? You do believe in God, don't you?

BD: Yeah. I sure do.

AW: So uh, so you know, see, evidently, you, at one time you didn't, right?

BD: Ah...

AW: You said, that's what you said in some statements, right? You said. "I don't believe in God".

BD: Yeah, yeah, uh.

AW: Evidently, if you do now and don't then, you weren't thinking then.

BD: Yeah, I must have done, I must have then, too.

AW: What?

BD: I must have then, too.

AW: Okay, I'll put that in. "How about using some of your five million dollars to save lives?" "I don't have that much". "Bullshit, I got inside information, you millionaire, pig." I didn't call you a pig, but, uh, you know, that's how I felt. "And you never do any benefits. Then there's your apolitical lyrics. Everyone who heard *Nashville Skyline* said 'Dylan's in a mellow head, he's singing about love.' You cut your hair, cut off all your hair. You only help apolitical rock people with their careers: you're a punk and me and the DLF are gonna do a number on you. We got some shit planned that's gonna blow your mind. Not only that, but everyone in rock with a political consciousness is gonna come down on you. Lennon has started already by calling you Zimmerman; McGuinn just put you down." "Where?" "In Creem". "How?" That's a little literary memory, 'cause it's like that song *I'm Not There*, you know? "Where?" "Down town". "When?" "Last night", you know. "Where?" "In Creem". "How?" "By saying you wrote *Ballad Of Easy Rider* even though you had told him not to." "What? Well tell..."

BD: You can just say, "Fuck him", man, you don't have to say the rest of that stuff.

AW: Okay. Fine.

BD: You don't have to say "I wanna get him", or anything like that. Just say "fuck him".

AW: But that's what you said. You went through that whole riff, man. You said, "I'm gonna get these people". That's what you said. You said it about five times.

BD: Okay, well you just add "fuck him" to it.

AW: All right. Well, what I want to know – who's gonna do this, uh, 'cause... "I'm not gonna take it. I'm gonna get them motherfuckers. I'm gonna get them". "Hey Bob, why not show the people..."

BD: You could even add it again. Another one.

AW: Okay. A couple of "fuck you's" in there. Well, you know, it's the underground press.

BD: They'll never get out of it.

AW: "Hey, Bob, why not show the people your heart's in the right place and do a benefit for John Sinclair?" "But, I don't have my thing together." "Bullshit, all you gotta do is show up and plunk your guitar a little and a hundred thousand freaks will come out of their pads and go anywhere you are —"

BD: I-I don't want to say "I don't have my thing together", man. I got my thing together!

AW: So, why don't y'do the thing?

BD: Well, I want to get back to that statement first.

AW: Yeah.

BD: I don t want to say that thing that "I don't have my thing together."

AW: Right.

BD: See, you, you can make somethin' else up, but, uh... don't leave that in there.

AW: What should I say, then?

BD: Let's see, what's the statement? (pause). **How 'bout, uh... let's see... how 'bout —**

AW: You said you don't have your thing together. You said, you know.. you're not ready to... you —

BD: Oh yeah, right! I'm not ready to go play concerts, man. That's th...

AW: All right, I'm not ready...

BD: That's not the same thing as saying...

AW: All right...

BD: I don't have my thing together.

AW: I'm not ready to go play concerts.

BD: I'm not about to...

AW: I'm not about to... go play concerts. All right?

BD: At this time.

AW: Right, I don't blame you, man, you know. You, uh... you know... you don t want to be part of the scene... you know... uh, all kinds of terrible things could happen to you in that hour, man... y-know.

BD: No, man... like, what for? Why should I go play for twenty thousand people, man? I mean, what...

AW: ...it would be…

BD: ...you know...

AW: ...more than twenty thousand.

BD: Hey, I've been there before...

AW: You make people happy, man...

BD: I've been there before, I...

AW: You make people happy.

BD: I've done it before...

AW: You set the whole trend in rock, man.

BD: I did —

AW: If you started doing things like that...

BD: You shoulda been at the Isle of Wight, man. I'd just like to see how much you'd still be talking...

AW: The Isle of Wight...

BD: ...if you were at the Isle of Wight.

AW: ...was a capitalist rip-off, man. I'm not talking about that kind of a scene, I'm talking about...

BD: Were you at Woodstock? (pause) **Were you at Woodstock?**

AW: I-I wasn't at Woodstock, man.

BD: Well, then you never did...

AW: I'm not talking about Woodstock.

BD: ...see those kind of things —

AW: I'm not talking about a free concert, man. I'm not talking about that... I'm talking about a benefit, you dig, in Madison Square Garden, or something like that, man...

BD: Go, on let's finish the article.

AW: (pause) Uh, you know — "but I don't have my thing together". "Bullshit."

BD: Uh, no, no, we're going to change that.

AW: Uh, right, right... uh, something in what you said before. But, you gotta... "all you gotta do is show up and plunk your guitar a little then a hundred thousand freaks will come out of their pads and go anywhere you are..." "Sorry, Al, I can't do it. But I will write a song about political prisoners on my next album." "I don't want promises for nine months later. I wanna see some action, now. See, Bob, you set the trends in rock and if you become, like, a human being a lot of other performers will go along. The sun had set and Dylan's wife had called him for dinner on the phone a couple of times."

BD: Oh, that, that whole last paragraph there man, I didn't think that was necessary.

AW: "Bob gave me his phone number and asked me to call him when I'm on the radio, or if something comes up. Ever hear me on the radio, Bob?" "Just a couple of times on Alex Bennett's show. I dug it when he asked if you had any personal messages for me". "What do you think of Bob Fass?" "He's a revolutionary brother, but he don't dig it when I attack you 'cause you were an old friend of his." "Well, Al, so long... Uh, one more thing – you're not gonna get into my life".

BD: Hey, those two sentences, man. I don't get them at all. I don't understand them, even.

AW: "Why, if you do, I might gain a soul".

BD: Yeah, well, that's shit, those last two sentences. I don't think I said that.

AW: Yes, you did. That's just what you said, man. You said, "You re not gonna get into my life"... I said, "Why?" Then you said, "If you do, I might gain a soul."

BD: I don't understand that, do you?

AW: Uh, I don't know, I don't know – it could be looked at in a number of ways, man -you could even

BD: Yeah, why don't you... why don t you take it out of your article and look at it in a number of ways, and let's uh – you know, and... and roll it around a while, and then when you know what it means, why don't you tell me? And then uh, let's see if it's worth putting in an article.

AW: (Pause) Uh...

BD: Is that fair? I don t know what it means man.

AW: So, how would you have me in the article?

BD: I don't know. It's your article, (pause) **Shit, I mean...**

AW: But, I mean, you're supposed to... all right, man, like, that's what happened during our...

BD: I know that's what happened.

AW: ...first conversation...

BD: But that ain't what happened, man... like, that last, uh, that last sentence don't end in any article, you know that. That didn't happen like that. I remember...

AW: ...all right...

BD: ...saying something like that, but it didn't have anything to do with how you're using it. You're just taking it out of context, like any of those things you find in *Look* Magazine.

AW: D'you want me to put it into context? D'you want me to put it back into context – then I say, "Is that a threat?", and then you say, you know "no, it isn't, but I know people who can kill you". That's what I remembered...

BD: Oh no, man!

AW: Or something like that, man.

BD: No!

AW: I was very paranoid, in a very paranoid mood, man.

BD: Well, don't take it out on me, man. I mean, come on...

AW: Well, that's why I changed it around, man. I don't have you, uh... comin' on like that. That's why I took it out, you know. So, I left it, I left it... other interpretation — "I might gain a soul." You couldn't...

BD: I don't wanna say that man, 'cause I don't know...

AW: ...You couldn't?

BD: ...'cause I don't... that sounds shitty...

AW: That's what you said. So fucking quotable, man!

BD: Well, what does that mean? I mean, like, is that, uh, that don't – aoh -- it leaves me cold, man, like, uh – it's, uh – doesn't even sound like me.

AW: But you said it, those were your exact words.

BD: "I gained a soul"... uh... what could that mean?

AW: Man, you know, you oughta stand behind things that you say.

BD: Yeah, man, but that was taken...

AW: That's the truth.

BD: ...right outta, right out of... I do stand behind most of what I say, man... but you know, I mean... a lot of time you just say stuff, you know.

AW: Oh, you don't stand behind anything you say, man.

BD: Sure, I do... sure, I do. I just don't dig it...

AW: You don't stand behind your old songs, man, that's for sure —

BD: Man, I'm gonna do an article on you, man. I think I'm gonna write a song about you, too.

AW: Well, I could use the publicity.

BD: Yeah, well... that's one reason why I wouldn't, man —

AW: (Laughter)

BD: ...but, uh...
AW: (Laughter)
BD: ...I got a good song, man — if I ever want to do one —
AW: What s it called?
BD: It s called 'Pig' --
AW: I'm a pig, eh?
BD: Yeah.
AW: Aw, bullshit, I'm a...
BD: ...yeah, man...
AW: ...pig, man.
BD: Yeah, man!
AW: You're the one who's a pig —
BD: Oh, no. Not at all...
AW: Oh, yeah !
BD: ...not at all, (laugh) **man, not at all. I don't think I wanna write it, though, just because of that publicity thing. I don't dig that at all. But, I got the song, man.**
AW: You re killing me.
BD: I'll sing it for you. (pause) **Well, I don't have it finished, actually.. but, uh...**
AW: I'm a pig, man?
BD: Hey, man.
AW: I don't have a million fucking dollars, man.
BD: I don't, but what does that have to do with it?
AW: 'Cause you have a million fucking dollars, man. See, you ain't – you ain't that much better than the cat who has nothing, man. You dig it. The cat who's walking around the Bowery, man. It's true, like, you know...
BD: (whisper) **Whaaat?**
AW: ...in some ways you're better, but you ain't a million dollars better worth, you know what I mean? Like, in times like this people, you know, like, when you have a million dollars in this society, man, it means, that other people don't have it, you know... (pause). Uh, don't you dig what I mean? Nobody should have, like, a million dollars, man. Nobody should be allowed to accumulate that much wealth. You know, that much surplus wealth, when there are other people around that don't have shit. You know, and not 'cause of their fuckin' skin color, man... not because of, uh, of anything else, 'cause they're despised 'cause they're not like straights, like hate anyone who's different than them in any kind of a way, right...
BD: Yeah, man, I think you're over... you're overlooking...
AW: ...No! I m telling you, man.
BD: ...a lot, man. You're overlooking a lot...
AW: I've had friends, man... I've had friends that got a lotta money together, you know, and, uh, I told them, man "you... you should put some of this fuckin' money back in the community – most of it, enough that, you know, keep enough so that you can live decently but don't fuckin'" , uh... you know, they didn't have peanuts compared to you, man. You know, and I told them to go fuck themselves if they're gonna fuckin' rip off, uh the, you know, people not putting anything back... but you're just a capitalist, that's all, man. 'Cept, instead of producing, uh... you know, yah... instead of producing, uh, uh, cars, or guns you produce, uh, you know, records, music.
BD: Hey man, that's, uh, that's something, though.
AW: It s something, man... but lately, it's nothin'. 'Cause lately not only do you keep the money, but the lyrics themselves have no kind of, uh, redeeming value, you know. You're, they're just, in fact, they're reactionary, you know. You're just, uh, every, all the shit is hitting the fuckin' fan... and you're singin'; *"Hope it... looks like nothin' but rain"*, you know, uh.
BD: That's a good song, man.

AW: What are you?
BD: Like...
AW: A weatherman?
BD: A what?
AW: A weatherman?
BD: Do you mind?
AW: "*It looks like nothing but rain nothin' but rain...*"
BD: (laugh)
AW: ...But I wanted, uh... if I want to fuckin', uh...
BD: Is your tape recorder still on, man?
AW: ...and it...
BD: Is it still running?
AW: Yeah.
BD: Oh, it didn't break down?
AW: Uh... no, no, it's.. it's a good one.
BD: Yeah, well, I ain't gonna call you no more, man, just because of that. I mean, I don't trust yah.
AW: Why, wuh... don't tell me you didn't tape-record my conversation...
BD: No, man, I... would, uh...
AW: ...any conversations with me, man...
BD: No, what do I want to do that for?
AW: You asked your secretary to tape record a conversation with me.
BD: She's not into that.
AW: She is, man.
BD: Nah...
AW: I heard a click.
BD: Oh, come on!
AW: You're tellin' me she's not into it, is that...
BD: Well, her phone's probably tapped, that's all.
AW: No, her phone isn't tapped. The Government, they love you man, they love you, man, they love you. I'm surprised Nixon didn't call you instead of Johnny Cash to...
BD: I am too, man (laughs)
AW: It's like, uh…
BD: Yeah.
AW: Uh... you know I was talkin' to her – she says, "Let me..." I call up, the television's going, she says, "Let me get myself together" – click. You know...
BD: Well, she probably went to another phone.
AW: Yeah, I told her, man. I said, "We must be on a party line with Jose Greco".
BD: Nah, she didn't, uh, tape you, man.
AW: Yeah, she taped me, man. I heard the click. She's incompetent. Then she flipped out, she thought I was gonna take her to court or something – she's so straight, you know. She say's, "I didn't do it! I'd never do it in a million years. I'd never do it" You know, 'cause I caught her committing an illegal act, you know. Uh...
BD: Well, well.
AW: You know. Whatever the scene is, man, like, uh... you know, I played this... there were a couple of women from, uh... Women's Lib... you know, militant women's thing over at my place, and, uh... I played that tape for' em, man, and they started yellin' at me! They said I shouldn't have attacked Naomi, 'cause she was a woman.
BD: That's true, man.
AW: Uh.. you know, and it wasn't her fault, you, know, she would've been a... if she was a man maybe she would've been Dylan, not just Dylan's secretary.
BD: Oh, you shouldn't go around taping people, man. I mean, that's just... that makes you no better than...

AW: You taped me!

BD: No man, that's not true, man. You shouldn't... I mean, that's gonna put you in the same league with all the uh... you know, with all the uh, government phone-tappers, man! Not only that, but you go through garbage like a pig, and you know...

AW: I go through garbage like a pig – but what I was doin' man, was a good thing.

BD: You tap phones, you go through garbage like a pig, you do a lot of things, man, which aren't really on the up and up.

AW: You taped me!

BD: No, man. They're not on the up and up.

AW: No, you pick all these things up, but what did I do with it, man? Did I... you see, I may have gone through yer garbage, man, but I didn't sell it to *Life Magazine*. I didn't sell yer garbage to *Life Magazine*.

BD: You think *Life Magazine*'s gonna buy my garbage?

AW: I haven't printed it up yet, man, or made a book out of it, *Dylan's Garbage's Collected Works*.

BD: You must get money from all these magazines that you... uh, send all these articles to.

AW: I don't, I don't. I send out all my articles for free, man. No, I'm not like you, man. Like, I send out all my articles for free, you dig, 'cause I believe that things should be free, an' I'm gonna start the ball rollin' with my articles, right? So I send 'em out all for free. I get all these letters – "Thanks a lot Weberman. We love ya", you know, and that's all I want to hear, man. When I'm fuckin' starving, you know, then I'm gonna fuckin'... then I'll, you know, then I'll have to find something to get money. I wouldn't be lying. I'll get a fuckin' job as a dishwasher at the Café Wha?, somethin' like that, man, you know. And I'll still send out my articles for free. Uh... you know, that's what I've chosen to do.

BD: Well, God bless you.

AW: D'you know how much I made from Dylanology, man? Like, twenty five dollars three years ago from EVO around Christmastime. And I'm proud of it, man, you know?

BD: No reason not to be.

AW: And like, uh... so I send out my articles for free and, uh, you know... so going through your garbage, I wasn't... what I was tryin' to do with that, man, was make you look ridiculous – and vulnerable, man. You know, and, uh, because you know, like... there's so many people who are, like, unhappy with you, and, you know, what you're doing, man. All the people in rock, you know... I listen to the songs over and over again, man, and you've made so many people unhappy by doing what you did.

BD: Made 'em happy too, made 'em happy too. I've made more happy than I've made unhappy.

AW: Yeah that's what John Lennon says but, uh, you know, like, uh...

BD: What did he say? Say that again.

AW: "*...and in the end the love that you take will equal the love that you make*" or somethin', but the love that you make will be bigger than the love that you take you know...

BD: Well, I've made a lot of 'em happy, man, more happy than unhappy. Their happiness has great... greatly overpowered their unhappiness.

AW: Uh... that's true. You've like, you've never really, you know, renounced any of the old songs, uh, except implicitly, you know. Uh... what can I tell you, man? Like you know...

BD: I think you oughta expand your thing, man, like, if you put some of that energy, and spread it out a little bit, you could get, uh... you know, you could get involved in a whole new thing.

AW: Dylanology's workin' out fine for me.

BD: Oh, I don't know if there's gonna be enough there, man, I mean just to be honest with you...

AW: Oh shit, man.

BD: I mean there is, but I mean, after you get your...

AW: Oh, I can interpret Creedence, man. I can interpret the Beatles, I can interpret the Stones...

BD: I'm not tryin' to tell you what to do, man, you know, but, uh...

AW: See, the only thing is, it all fuckin' comes back to you, you know, to Dylanology. I go...

BD: You know why it always comes back to me, man? Because, like, uh...

AW: Creedence's new record, man, I hear, uh...

BD: They're not doin' what I'm doin' that's all, that's why it comes back to...

AW: Did you hear Creedence's new record, man?

BD: No, I haven't.

AW: They have all these references to you there, man.

BD: What does he say about that? What does... what's his... what's his name...?

AW: He'll deny it, man. He'll deny it.

BD: Why would he deny it? I mean why?

AW: 'Cause it's a secret language, man, you know he's not gonna say it. Why, because he said you're a junkie, man. He's not gonna say, "Yeah, Dylan's a junkie and we don't dig..." 'cause it's informing.

BD: Well, why don't you go out and, and... meet with him face-to -face about it man?

AW: 'Cause he... they won't see me.

BD: Oh well, see him, when he comes to the city. Just go up and pound on his door, man.

AW: He could deny his ass off, he can deny his ass off, man, from today 'til tomorrow.

BD: Well, what if I deny it all? I've denied a lot of it to you too.

AW: So everybody can deny it; as long as you don't come up with another system that's more complicated and makes more sense, as far as I'm concerned mine stands, my system stands. You see what I mean?

BD: No.

AW: It's like, you could tell me it doesn't mean anything, but okay, you know, I have all this fuckin' information, you know, like, uh... and that's what I work on, the information. All this is secondary. I haven't even read the Lennon interview in Rolling Stone. I don't take these things seriously. All I do is read... all I do is listen to the lyrics and interpret them. I know what the fuck is happening, man, and, you know, it's a drag, you know, and everybody else thinks it's a drag, and I don't see how you can, like...

BD: Who's this "everybody else", man?

AW: Everybody else thinks it's a drag.

BD: But who? Everyone on your block, or, er...?

AW: Everyone on the street (laughs).

BD: What street? Second Avenue, Fourth Street?

AW: It's true. The mass media.

BD: What mass media, man?

AW: The mass media, man. The records, the telephone...

BD: Wow!

AW: Hey, you know, speaking of knocking on somebody's door, man, one time I was trying to find John Lennon. I know this woman who works in a booking agency, you know. She said "I know where John Lennon is". So we go up there – nobody's home – I leave this note on the door, It say's, "A friendly stranger would like to talk to you about your dream!" This fuckin' businessman calls up my old lady (laughs), and says, "What is this shit?, you want to talk to me, a friendly stranger wants to talk to me about my dreams you know, my dreams are of a sexual nature".

BD: Who said that?

AW: Just some guy which she... see, this woman got the, uh, room... Lennon's room mixed up...

BD: Oh.

AW: You know, it wasn't Lennon's room and I stuck this note under the door, written in what I think is the secret language of rock...

BD: Yeah.

AW: ...but this guy didn't know about it, being a conventioneer in the food industry.

BD: Oh, I see.

AW: But that, you know... it gets you into trouble, sometimes, man.

BD: Yeah, it must.

AW: But, uh, you know... but I know... I know what's happening, man, and, uh, you know, I have so much information.

BD: Well, why don't you just get a guitar, man, and write some songs yourself, man?

AW: 'Cause there's a need for someone like myself, man, you know? There's a need for someone like myself. Nobody else is doin' it, not even the...

BD: Oh, but you're so extreme, man, you're so extreme. I mean, you know, like you're off on one end. There's no...

AW: Well, I consider that a compliment.

BD: There's no-one on, like... there's no-one balancing your other end, man.

AW: Sure! There's all them lame rock critics, man.

BD: No, they're all in the middle, man. There's no-one.

AW: Greil Marcus say's I'm full of shit, man. All the other rock critics think I'm full of shit. They're full of shit. They're corrupt, man.

BD: Greil Marcus is or isn't, did you say?

AW: He's full of shit.

BD: Yeah, I think so too.

AW: Uh... anyway... like...

BD: Did you see the thing he wrote about *Self Portrait*?

AW: I didn't read it, I just...

BD: Oh, that was really bullshit, man.

AW: Ah... he's a prick, man. He's in cahoots with Grossman.

BD: Is he?

AW: I think so, man. He gets... I think he gets tapes from... I say, Greil, could I have a fuckin' tape from you man? I want the outs from the *Basement Tape*, you know – *I'm Not There*, *Clothesline*. He said, (that's serious) he says, "I have to call Sam Gordon and ask him". I says "What?" Is this one big fuckin' conspiracy, man? You know, like...

BD: Oh, wow!

AW: ...he say's "No, no, I didn't get 'em from Sam Gordon, but I gotta call him anyway and ask him if I can give 'em to you."

BD: Oh, man.

AW: Uh... you know, so finally I got 'em out of the office, you know, by hook or by crook. I got 'em eventually myself, but, uh, fuckin' Greil Marcus wouldn't give 'em to me. He's a cocksucker, man you know, and then he fuck... all the tapes he has... he hoards his tapes, you know, he hoards 'em, doesn't give 'em out to anybody. Keeps 'em, you know, among the, uh, elite or whatever, what he considers to be the elite. So fuck him, he balances me out. Jann Wenner balances me out, man. Uh... they would never print my stuff in Rolling Stone in a million years. Uh, let's see, who else? Uh, David Whalley. All the fuck... every other rock critic is there balancing me out, man, you know. An' I'm goin' up to New Haven, Connecticut tonight.

BD: Oh yeah. For what?

AW: With David Peel. We're gonna be on the radio there.

BD: On Dylanology?

AW: Uh... Dylanology... yeah, Dylanology.

BD: In New Haven?

AW: New Haven, Yale, I got a lotta friends up there.

BD: Jesus!

AW: Any messages for New Haven? There is a telephone phone in...

BD: No, man, not really, but don't, uh... don't get, you know, you know, about, uh... I don't know, man, I have no messages really. You know, not really. I don't really care. Don't matter to me man, like, it's just...

AW: Got no messages anymore, that's for sure... no more messages any more.

BD: Huh. What do you mean?

AW: Messages, you know. Like message songs, you know.

BD: Oh... uh, I don't.

AW: Remember those?

BD: Yeah, man. I remember them. They were just messages to me, though. I told Scaduto that.

AW: You talked to Scaduto?

BD: Yeah, I did, and I told him that...

AW: Why?

BD: ...and that knock... that fucked him up, man. He had no idea about that. That just wiped him out. He said he was gonna have to go back down to listen to all those songs.

AW: Well, I wish him luck, man. Tell him also to change his life-style, if he wants to understand 'em.

BD: Yeah, it's off.

AW: Like, you know, that's the scene, man. I'm, uh... Dylanology...

BD: Yeah, well, how much time do you have... how much time do you have tonight on Dylanology?

AW: All night.

BD: You got all night? What is it, underground radio?

AW: College... no, no, it's a stereo station, big fuckin'... it's... uh, Yale station. You know, I was there, last time I was there I was fuckin' gassed, you know, I was being fuckin' gassed by the pigs. Wait a minute – but I'm a pig!

BD: Is it all... yeah, you are. Is it all on Dylanology...?

AW: Oh no, no, I'm not a pig...

BD: Yeah, of course you are, man...

AW: I do my thing, man...

BD: Of course you're a pig, man.

AW: I went through garbage 'cause I vamped on a fuckin' pig... I'm a pig, man...?

BD: More than that, man. You have a pig mentality, yeah. Shit, man, if I was a kid growin' up, man, I'd have to look out for you. I would keep my eyes open for you if I was a kid growin' up. I'd make sure that... whatever street I went down, I'd have to go on the other side of the street when you came down, man.

AW: Yeah, sure man (laughs).

BD: I got 'em covered, man. I've had 'em covered since I was a little kid.

AW: I'm fighting against the fuckin' pigs, man, I'm fighting against the fuckin' pigs. I'm not a pig myself, man.

BD: You're a pig... mentality, man. Mentality is what makes a pig.

AW: No, I wouldn't have gone through your garbage, man... I told you...

BD: Shit, man. You might as well put a badge on you, man. You might as well just wear a badge.

AW: Uh...

BD: Right under, right under your leather coat, just a little badge right above your heart there.

AW: I do – my button, that's my badge. Like... that's really not true, man. And I'm not gonna take it seriously coming from you. Comin' from somebody who wrote... who writes songs like you write, man.

BD: Hey, man, who writes better songs than I do? Name me somebody.

AW: I can name you a hundred fuckin' people, man.

BD: Oh, come on. You can't. You know you can't.

AW: Uh... let's see, uh... Creedence Clearwater...
BD: Oh, bullshit!
AW: ...Uh... I think *Memo To Turner*, uh, was as good as, uh...
BD: ...Oh just a bunch of faggot bullshit all wrapped up in about two or three lines, and then dumped out with...
AW: You're the one he calls a faggot in there, man.
BD: What?
AW: He says, "He's a faggy little leather boy with a smaller piece of stick".
BD: He's talkin' about himself, man (laughs)**.**
AW: No he's not, he's talkin' about you, man.
BD: Oh, get out of here.
AW: And, uh... let's see... Gordon Lightfoot ain't bad.
BD: Uh?
AW: Gordon Lightfoot ain't bad.
BD: Yeah, well, he's all right.
AW: Uh... he writes good songs. Let me see, there was some cat who... I was doin' my concordance – she uses a very, very... a lotta imagery just like *Tarantula*. Ah, Barbara Keith.
BD: Uh... don't know.
AW: Uh... Ken Lauber.
BD: Oh, he's all right, yeah, he's okay.
AW: Jack Elliott.
BD: Jack doesn't write songs.
AW: John Lennon.
BD: No, never.
AW: George Harrison.
BD: Mm, maybe.
AW: Uh... Jim McGuinn.
BD: Never.
AW: Procol Harum. Keith Reed or what's his name...
BD: Yeah, well, they're all right.
AW: They're a bunch of fuckin' junkies.
BD: Yeah, I guess, if you say so.
AW: How about Grace Slick? Too political.
BD: I don't know. Does she write stuff?
AW: Sure. Too political, man.
BD: Mm, probably. If you say.
AW: Country Joe, too political. Phil Ochs, too political. They're all lame man. They're writing songs about what's goin' down now. That's nowhere, that's... a bunch of assholes do that kinda shit, man. What you gotta do is write songs like what went down thirty years ago in the fuckin' escapist music industry. That's where it's at, man. Because people dying... you know, being fucked up, is really a good thing. They may not know it, you know, they may not understand what is happening to them, but it's really a good thing, and we should let it happen. And, you know, the last thing in the world that you wanna do is say something about it, you know, because then, you know, especially, you know, if you have a lot of influence, because then people might, you know, begin to think, you know, and, uh... you don't want that to happen because if people begin to think, maybe they'll stop buying your records. Your later records, you know.
BD: That's gonna make me think.
AW: It's gonna make people think, man, like... you're fuckin' irrational. Nothin' is gonna fuckin' happen to you if you speak out, you know. Nothing is going to happen to you.
BD: Hey, dig, I've got to, uh... I gotta go.
AW: Okay.

BD: Did we get it straightened out about the interview or the article?
AW: Right, so I'll change all the stuff you want me to change and then I'll mail it out.
BD: Where's it gonna be?
AW: Where's it gonna be?
BD: Yeah.
AW: Uh... it's gonna... I'm... It's going to every underground newspaper in America, for free.
BD: Wow. Hey, can I... when are you gonna mail 'em out?
AW: Uh... Monday.
BD: Uh... what time?
AW: Well, I'm not doin' it. UPS is doin' it, Underground Press Syndicate. They're like a, you know, White Panther-type operation.
BD: Could I see it after you make some corrections?
AW: Sure, sure.
BD: Uh... okay.
AW: Okay, Monday.
BD: Yeah. What time?
AW: Any time that's convenient for you.
BD: Oh, can you bring it by, like...
AW: I gotta pick up some buttons on Monday.
BD: Oh yeah?
AW: They're gettin' some buttons printed up.
BD: Who? What does it say on the buttons?
AW: Free Bob Dylan...
BD: That's far out, man.
AW: ...DLF.
BD: I'm havin' some made up for you too, man.
AW: What, Fuck Of A. J. Weberman?
BD: No, man.
AW: A. J.'s a pig.
BD: A. J.'s a pig. Right.
AW: Well, you know, that's...
BD: Or I'm just gonna have a pig, man, with a picture of you on it.
AW: Where would you get the picture of me (laughing)?
BD: Oh, we're gonna take it out of an underground newspaper.
AW: Well... like...
BD: It's okay, man, you'll live through it.
AW: You don't have my permission to use that picture.
BD: You don't have my permission to do any of this shit, man.
AW: Uh... I don't? Holy shit, what am I gonna do? I gotta fuckin', uh, take my bank account out and put it in a safe deposit box in case I get sued.
BD: Nah. You won't get sued. But, uh, you'll live through it. I'm sure you're gonna live through all of it.
AW: Oh, I hope so, man.
BD: Yeah you will. It won't be nothin', just, you know,... it'll be good for you man, it'll be good for you.
AW: Why will it be good for me?
BD: You'll have your picture with pig written on it, man, you know...
AW: I'm not a pig, man. I don't see how you could fuckin' call me a pig.
BD: Hey... come on, don't give me that.
AW: I fuckin', I fuckin' fight, man.
BD: You're fightin' to go through... you're only fightin' to go through my garbage, man.
AW: I fight pigs, man, I fight pigs. Yeah, but, like, a lotta people believe that you've become a pig, man. And here I am, a Dylanologist in...

BD: A Dylanologist pig, man.

AW: ...in a certain position, man, in a certain position, you know, where I could do a number on a cat, you know, who's become a pig, who's become a fuckin' sell-out, you dig? You just, know, you know... like, that's the way it goes, man. You write all these songs. Some jerk is gonna fuckin' believe 'em, man. You know? And he's gonna get pissed-off when he finds out that you didn't believe 'em, or you don't believe 'em anymore.

BD: I believe 'em.

AW: You know. It's, you know, like, uh... not only...

BD: Yeah. I'll see you later, man.

AW: Okay. So long.

BD: On Monday?

AW: What?

BD: Monday.

AW: Yeah, Monday.

BD: All right. Bye-bye.

January 1971
A.J. Weberman Interview, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 163-175.

This interview was first published in the *East Village Other* on January 19 1971. In it's original format, this interview is very difficult to follow so I have taken the liberty of reformatting it, in part, to allow the content to flow more readily – not a word has been changed. See the previous article (Page 137 et seq.) for a background to this interview.

A Dylan interview conducted by A. J. Weberman, Dylanologist & Minister of Defence, Dylan Liberation front.

The following interview is actually a series of conversations I had with Dylan in early January 1971. Since D wouldn't let me record them, I had to reconstruct them through my recollections. When I showed Bob what I had come up with, he said, **"There's lies in there and that's sneaky shit talkin' to a cat, then writing about it."** We corrected my errors over the phone and D gave me some direct quotes (I recorded the phone call and I have included parts of it). I think I caught the leap of D's bound to some extent. NOTE: D stands for Dylan. CB stands for current bag.

I WAS REALLY fucking hassled the day I met Dylan. Pigs. Heavy shit. I was goin' fucking crazy. I made it to the D class that I teach each week at the Alternate U & gave a shirt rap & then said – "Tonight's the field trip to D's pad." About fifty of us headed down Sixth Avenue towards McDougal St. When we got to Fourth Street I pointed out the pad D lived in from 62-64 and tried to explain how it related to D's single – POSITIVELY FOURTH STREET – but this drunk wouldn't let me get a word in edgewise. We continued to march & picked up a couple of street kids along the way (that's the dangerous part about doing something like this – like I could trust the people in my class, but these kids were full of undirected violence). Soon we were all standing in front of D's. I began to yell, HEY BOBBY PLEASE CRAWL OUT YOUR WINDOW. Someone else screamed – OPEN THE DOOR BOBBY. The lights started to go on and off and one of D's kids came to the window & started playing with his blocks on the sill, building a sort of wall against us. We stopped yelling. I invited the class into D's lobby in order to show them where D "came down into the lobby to make a small call out" but by this time the class had split into two groups – the hardcore Dylan Liberationists were with me in the hall, while the people with groupie tendencies were standing across the street. Then Eric Williams (DLF) said – "Hey man, I saw someone look out from on top of the stairs for a flash." Dylan was home.

We went outside and I decided to go through D's garbage with the class, & so they formed a circle around me. David Peel (DLF) pointed out that his garbage bags were green, like his money. My "Garbage Article" had already come out so there was nothing of interest to be found, but we did the thing anyway. Then one of the street kids decided he was gonna enter D's thru a window. I was explaining what we'd do to him if he tried it (I wasn't ready for an illegal demo – yet) when Sharon (DLF – groupie tendencies) comes over and says: "There's someone standing across the street who looks JUST LIKE DYLAN." "Holy shit" I thought. "What the fuck am I going to do? D's caught me red-handed going through his garbage. He's gonna be pissed off... He may get violent. I may have to beat the shit out of that slimy bootlicker here and now." I looked up and saw Bob standing directly across the street from – me – he was dressed in denim, wearing rimless glasses and it looked like smoke was coming out of his head. I just stood there. David Peel came over and pushed me forward. It was like High Noon. "Do not

forsake me oh my Dylanology." I eventually walked over to D, who looked like a cross between someone in his "current bag" and a Talmudic scholar and said:

AW: How are you, man?
BD: Turn off the tape recorder. (I had one with me and I did)**. Al, why'd ya bring all these people around my house for?**
AW: It's a field trip for my Dylan class, man... but actually it's a demonstration against you and all you've come to represent in rock music.
BD: Alan, let's go and talk about this.
He took me by the arm (I knew that very instant he meant to do me harm) & he started putting on the pressure and I had no other choice except for to go.
AW: Cool it man, that fuckin' hurts – no violence – unless you want to fight it here and now.
BD: Al, did you ever write anything about my karate? Ever write anything about my race and stuff it my mailbox?
AW: I knew you took karate but I never wrote anything about it... and your race...?
BD: What race are you Alan?
AW: The human race.
BD: And what race were your parents?
AW: Well, they considered themselves Jewish, I guess.
BD: You sure you never wrote anything about my race?
AW: No, man, it ain't yer race I object to, it's yer politics and lifestyle.
BD: Well, I didn't think ya would, Al.
AW: Hey Bob, what do you do with all your money?
BD: It all goes to kibbutzim in Israel and Far Rockaway.
AW: But you were one of the first Jews to put down Israel.
BD: Where?
AW: In the liner notes to ANOTHER SIDE OF D.
BD: Don't remember!... You know, Al, you've been in the city too long, the city does something to your thinking – I know how it is.

D sat down on this stoop a few blocks from his pad and we continued the conversation.

AW: What about your CB, Bobby?

He denied it and did something that would make people believe he was telling the truth. But not A. J. Like he says –

BD: We'll fly over the ocean JUST AS THEY SUSPECT

("Fly over ocean" is a metaphor for D's CB from other contexts). Later on he told me -

BD: Everyone's been asking me about your writing.
AW: The man in Dylan would do nearly any task when asked for compensation... Just give him his current bag. From my TOES up to my HEELS. Dig what I mean.
(Somewhat taken aback by D's willingness to co-operate, I told him)
Man, but there's all this evidence in your poetry – I could stand here for hours and hours running it all down... and then there's all the songs written to you by other poets in yer own language putting you down for your CB.
BD: Al, you've got to keep in mind that my poetry doesn't reflect the way I'm feeling, now, it's like years behind.
AW: Well, bullshit...

So we talked. D said he didn't dig the Panthers because of their position on the Mid-East situation -

BD: Little Israel versus all those...

I started to explain to D how the Panthers believed that everyone has a right to live: Jews, Arabs and Palestinian refugees, when this kid from my class come over and says he wants to talk to D. I told him that was cool but to wait until we got done... I had something important to say to Bob & I didn't know if I'd ever see him again. (I was seizing the time). So the punk says – "You're full of shit and so is Dylanology." So I grabbed him by the collar and screamed SPLIT, ASSHOLE! He left but as he was going he yelled out in grade-school intonation – WEBERMAN'S BOOTLEGGING *TARANTULA* (D's suppressed novel). Dylan said I only had half the book – the other half was out in California – & that I should never worry about running out of things to interpret. He said he was gonna invite me up to Woodstock a couple of months ago. I asked:

AW: How come you didn't? How come I had to have a demonstration in front of yer house to get you to negotiate?... You know how dedicated I am & how well I know your work.

BD: I know, Al, and one day we'll go for a ride together and I'll interpret all my poems for ya.

AW: We ain't goin' down by the docks, are we?

BD: No... Al, you scared my tenants yelling like that.

AW: Sorry, man, I didn't mean to drag yer innocent people into it... dig like these radical freaks were staying over at the Archives & I told them where you were at & they thought about trashing your place but I told them DON'T DO IT... It ain't fair to Dylan's kids.

BD: Al, I know a lot of people who want to hurt you, especially after that 'garbage' thing – you know, all these college kids come to my garbage & take some of it back to their dorms – you wouldn't like these kids either...

AW: Get a garbage compactor and I'll come round and pick it up once a week.

BD: I don't like machines... no, that's not true.

AW: Bob, you wouldn't have me offed, would you?

BD: You scared?

AW: Sure I am, this is an oligarchy, the more money you have the more power.

BD: I wouldn't do it, Al, don't worry, it's too late anyway.

AW: I didn't think so man, it would be like GM offing Nader, but if you do, you BETTER do a good job.

I went on and gave D a rap against imperialism, racism and sexism (he didn't seem like he was listening) and then I told him that Nashville Skyline sucked while Self Portrait was a stone rip-off since many people bought it, played it once, and stuck it on their shelf. Neither album related to objective reality. Dylan responded quietly –

BD: Well, there were two good songs on *S. P., DAYS OF FORTY-NINE* and *COPPER KETTLE*... and without those two LPs there'd be no *New Morning*. Anyway I'm just starting to get back on my feet as far as my music goes... Al, do you use amphetamine?

AW: No, man, the reason I have so much energy is because I'm tuned in to the life force that's trying to assert itself here on earth – I'M ALIVE MAN.

BD: Why worry so much about earth when there's...

AW: What do you want me to worry about: if Mars invade us?

BD: What drugs do you use, Al?

AW: Just reefer and caffeine, and you?

BD: No drugs.

AW: BULLSHIT! (Although I must admit that D's eyes looked normal almost every time we met).

BD: Well, so long, Al, you're an interesting fellow, see you in a few weeks.

I gave him the power handshake & he split.
When I got home I was fucking wasted. I was rapping with Harvey, a lawyer friend, when the phone rang -

BD: Hello Al, this is Bob.

Suddenly the telephone began to look like my record player.

BD: Want to come over and visit me tomorrow?
AW: That's like asking a strung-out junkie if he wants a fix.
BD: Al, I wanted to thank you for helping me sell a lot of records – your articles have helped to keep it going.
AW: Yeah, that's one aspect of Dylanology I don't dig... but I may cancel it out soon.
BD: Al, do you have a driver's license?
AW: No, never learned to drive.
BD: Too bad, I know of this chauffeur's job that's open.
AW: Are you trying to buy me out, man? STOP RIGHT THERE. It's im-fucking-possible.
BD: No, no, I wasn't trying to buy you out, I just wanted you to see me from another seat, you've been on the streets too long.
AW: Hey Bob, you know that song CHAMPAGNE, ILLINOIS you wrote and gave to Carl Perkins?
BD: Yeah, I figured Carl needed a song.
AW: He needed something, anyway, why not write a song called CARBONDALE, ILL. 'cause that's where the pigs just murdered this black man who was gonna testify against them... (Dylan remained silent).
You there?
BD: Call ye tomorrow.

I hung up. The next day he called me & told me to come over to his midtown studio with a tape-deck and an amplifier if I wanted to hear some rare D tapes cause all he had at the studio was a record player. My old lady, Ann, helped me take the stuff uptown & then split cause D said he wanted to see me alone. D began -

BD: I've seen you around a lot, Al.
AW: Bob, let's set up the equipment, okay?
I went over to the speaker and asked him to disconnect it & he started unscrewing the terminal with no lead on it.
AW: Let me do it, man,
& I did the thing. (This little bit of play acting and the riff about not having a tape recorder in his studio was a clever ploy designed to convince me D wasn't into recording conversation, but I didn't go for it & maintained my cool when it came to saying self-incriminating things.) We began -
BD: What do you think of Tim Leary?
AW: I think he's great – like he was into revolution all along but felt he could attract a lot of the middle class by talking about it in mystical terms. He's a national hero of Woodstock Nation. What do you think?
BD: I don't follow politics.
AW: How come I found newspaper in yer garbage every day?
BD: It's not my garbage – everyone in my building – we mix all the garbage together.
AW: Sure ye do!... hey man, I'll tell you something about yer politics – they're fucking genocidal – cause I talk to a lot of people when I'm out on the streets selling Tarantula

and most of the people I talk to got the impression from that *Sing Out* interview that you support the war in Vietnam.

BD: I only did that to get back at the freaks who wouldn't leave me alone & let me do my thing up in Woodstock – every five minutes there was someone at my door. I mean this fame thing got out of hand. I never expected to become this famous. I DON'T DIG IT. Everywhere I go – man, even if I go to some small town somewhere – a bunch of freaks always manages to find me and then they go ape-shit.

AW: Get a long-haired wig, they'd never recognize you.

BD: Why don't you buy me one, Al...

AW: Hey man, how come you associated yourself with Cash – that lackey was so conservative at that time you did things together that Nixon later invited him to sing at the White House & Cash still goes out of his way to praise Nixon's genocidal policies at his concerts.

BD: I've heard Cash since I was a kid... I love him.

AW: Bob, yer so fucking conservative lately, I'm surprised Nixon didn't invite you to sing fer him.

BD: I am too, man.

AW: Man, almost all the other rock people put you down in their songs – in yer own language – for yer politics.

BD: They're just using my phrasing.

AW: No, man, they understand what you're saying the same way I do – from studying yer poetry.

BD: Why don't you ask them about it?

AW: Man, they'd deny it cause it's a secret language & 'cause of the controversial nature of your CB which they sing about – anyway it's poetry & it's up to the listener or critic to figure it out.

BD: I deny it's happening and so do they.

AW: Hey, Dylan, man, all of you can deny your asses off, but as long as ya don't come up with another system that's more consistent, makes more sense, etc., MINE STANDS, DIG?

BD: No.

AW: And, man, if you really believe in your current bag and want to continue to remain in it, how come you copped-out on yourself in your poetry? And the poetry is simple enough that many people understand it. Isn't that indicative of a contradiction in yer personality?

Now I had Dylan going. He suddenly became very depressed and didn't say anything. He looked hurt. I almost felt sorry for him.

AW: Hey Bob, you okay, man? like a lot of these cats are full of shit – putting you down for not doing anything when they don't do shit themselves.

BD: Remember, Al, I'm not like them... not fresh out of college...

AW: Man, you've been telling everyone my interpretations are 'way off'... let's hear you interpret one of your songs, then I'll interpret it and we'll see whose interpretation is better... how about *TONIGHT I'LL BE STAYING HERE WITH YOU*?

BD: Okay, but I feel stupid... *Throw my ticket out the window*... so we were down in Nashville and the train was leaving and I didn't want to go so I said...

AW: Hey man, didn't you once sing '*You hand in your money*' for the line '*You hand in your ticket*' (from MR JONES) at a concert in England?

BD: Yeah.

AW: So doesn't ticket symbolize money?

BD: A ticket is anything you want it to be.

AW: You mean your symbolism isn't consistent?

BD: It's as consistent as me.

AW: So isn't it money?

BD: It could be.

Dylan then changed the subject.

BD: You sure you didn't write any letters about my race?
AW: No, man, how many times do I have to tell you... like every letter I ever wrote you was on Dylan Archives stationery – was that?
BD: Yes, I got it right here.

He couldn't find it. (Since "letter" symbolizes "article" in D's symbology, he may have been referring to part of my East Village Other "garbage article", where, after finding cards and thank-you notes from D's family, I wrote – "Good to see Dylan is still a Zimmerman. What I meant by that was: "Good to see D still associates with middle-class lames like his straight relatives." It was a riff in the Lenny Bruce *LIMA OHIO* & – John Lennon "don't believe in Zimmerman" tradition & not anti-semitic.)

AW: Did you ever write a song to me?
BD: Absolutely not.
AW: How about *Dear Landlord*, or was that to Grossman?
BD: Grossman wasn't in my mind when I wrote it. Only later when people pointed out the song may have been written for Grossman I thought it could have been... It's an abstract song... Sure as hell wasn't written for you.
AW: Does Albert still act in your behalf?
BD: No.

Throughout our conversation the phone rang constantly and at one point someone came to the door and handed D a fan letter and a book of poems. He read the fan letter right then and there and handed me the book.

BD: Take a look at it – tell me what you think – advise me – you're a knowledgeable cat and I could use some advice – even on politics.
AW: Bullshit.
BD: I should have a book of my poems out in two years & a book containing all my songs should be out soon & I'm planning to release that song you have a rare tape of – *SHE'S YOUR LOVER NOW* – as a single.
AW: Bullshit... What do you think about my work, man?
BD: Your approach is sincere.
AW: You know, if I lived in another age I might have been a Talmudic scholar.
BD: So would I.
AW: I guess so – you say 'I'm sincere.' Why didn't you say that in the Rolling Stone interview instead of saying I was 'way-off?
BD: I'm thru with that. The only reason I gave them an interview was because they hounded me for years.
AW: Do you follow the rock criticism scene closely?
BD: No.
AW: How come I found all those rock papers in yer garbage?
BD: I only read them when Al Kooper brings them over... Wanna hear a tape?
He played one cut – it was D singing *DON'T YE TELL HENRY*, a song the band often does at concerts – this lent support to my theory that D ghosts for the band.
AW: We got a better fidelity version of this tape back in the Archives.

Then D offered me all this stuff that would help my "career" as a rock critic; I could sit in on recording sessions, he hinted I could call him up & get info on his new records thusly

making my review "straight from the horses mouth" so to speak. I kind of got the feeling that I'd get all these privileges if I behaved. FUCK THAT SHIT.

BD: Want to see the rest of the studio?

We walked into his room filled with the band's instruments and D's paintings. They were these impressionistic abysslike things.

BD: What do you think of my paintings?
AW: Stick to poetry.
BD: I paint what's on my mind.
AW: Yeah, empty.

For the first time D laughed – IT TAKES A LOT to make Dylan LAUGH – but he could relate to emptiness. Then I decided to lay it on the line -

AW: Dylan, you've got to live up to your responsibility as a culture hero – you're DYLAN, man, every freak has a soft spot in their heart for ya, they love ya, you're DYLAN, DYLAN, DYLAN.
BD: I'm not Dylan, you're Dylan.
AW: I know, you're some other man, right?
We went back into the front of the studio -
BD: Want some records, Al?
AW: No, I get them for free from the record companies.
BD: Want a rare picture of me?
AW: I told you we got all that shit back in the Archives... Getting back to the subject at hand, did you ever think that maybe your wealth has corrupted you – you once said that the more of a stake you have in the system the more conservative one becomes - 'Relationships of ownership they whisper in the sings,' etc. And man, you used the struggle of black people for a decent life to make you famous, remember *BLOWIN' IN THE WIND* and you ripped the blacks for their music – YOU OWE THEM QUITE A BIT – any truth to what I'm saying man?
BD: Could be.

Then I began to tell Bob why I feel the way I do about Third World Liberation & went into a riff about my visit with a very poor cat in Mexico.

BD: Let's write a song together about your trip & we'll split the royalties.
AW: Send my cut to Caesar Chavez, man.
BD: So you just tell me what happened to you and I'll do the writing.
AW: I was down in Progresso, in the Yucatan, & I stayed with this labourer, a typical Third World scene, poverty, famine, disease – like being born into a nightmare – prolonged death agony – anyway, the cat became a 'bracero' – rhymes with sombrero. And this cat thought the Communists were 'little people' – he was brainwashed – his pad was next to a garbage dump. Now we got to convince Amerikans – thru this song – that they should support wars of national liberation.

Dylan came up with a song that went like this – **"Down in Progresso a bracero lived in a sombrero full of espresso."**

AW: What the fuck is this, man? No one is ever gonna be convinced of anything when you write that abstractly.
BD: That's my thing, Al. Know anything of the other books being written about me?

AW: Well, Robert Shelton, Tony Scaduto and Toby Thompson are doing books. I know Tony. He says he's goin' around talkin' to all your old friends (Jack Elliott, the McKenzies etc) and yer old lovers (Suzie Rotolo, Joanie Baez, etc) collecting 'information' about you – he said he would have studied yer lyrics but he knew he couldn't get permission to reprint them.

BD: That's not the reason – he could have never figured them out – he'll only come up with rumors.

AW: He did a pretty good job, tho.
Man, I think you're a fucking reactionary. You don't use your influence to save lives. Look at all the death around us. Look what just happened in Pakistan – that was the result of capitalism – the people were so poor they couldn't cope with a natural disaster.

BD: I wonder why the good Lord wanted all those people to die?

AW: You don't believe in God... !

BD: I sure do...

AW: But how about *WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE*... Did ya believe in God then?

BD: I must have then, too.

AW: How about using some of your five million dollars to save lives?

BD: I don't have that much.

AW: Bullshit, I got inside info, you multimillionaire PIG. Anyway, you were a self-proclaimed millionaire in '65. And you never do any benefits. Then there's your apolitical lyrics – everyone who heard *Nashville Skyline* said – 'Dylan's in a mellow head. He's singing about love.' You cut your hair, you only help apolitical rock people with their careers - you're a punk and me and the Dylan Liberation Front are going to do a number on you. We got some shit planned that's gonna blow your mind. Not only that but everyone in rock with a political consciousness is gonna come down on you. Lennon has started already by calling you Zimmerman. McGuinn just put you down.

BD: Where?

AW: In *Creem*.

BD: How?

AW: By saying you write *BALLAD OF EASY RIDER* even tho you told him not to.

BD: What? Well, I want to know who's gonna do this (getting angry) **'cause I'm not gonna take it. I'm gonna get them. I'm gonna get them. They'll never get out of it. Too bad for them... punks!**

AW: Hey Bob, why not show the people your heart's in the right place and do a benefit for John Sinclair?

BD: I'm not about to help Sinclair by doing a concert, nor am I about to do any concerts at this time man.

AW: All you got to do is show up and plunk your guitar a little and a hundred thousand freaks will come out of their pads and go anywhere you are...

BD: Sorry, Al, I can't do it. But I will write a song about political prisoners on my next album...

AW: I don't want any promises for nine months later, I WANT TO SEE SOME ACTION NOW... see, Bob, you set the trends in rock and if you become like a human being a lot of other performers will go along...

BD: Al, a lot of the things you do aren't on the up and up. You tap phones and ya go thru garbage like a pig.

AW: But I don't sell the garbage to *Life* magazine.

BD: You must get money for your articles.

AW: I'm not like you, man. I send em all out fer free... everything should be free... money equals slavery. I'm proud I do it.

BD: No reason not to be but Al I'm gonna write a song about you.

AW: I could use the publicity.

BD: That's one reason why I wouldn't... but I got a good song called PIG.

AW: I can't take that seriously coming from you, multimillionaire who hoards his bread. No matter how you cut it, when you have all that bread and most people in the world have shit, you're the enemy – THE PIG. Bobby, you're just another capitalist, but instead of producing cars, guns, etc., you produce culture.

BD: That's something.

AW: Sure it is... '*Blue Moon, you left me standing alone*'...

BD: Al, if I was a kid growing up I'd have to look out for you... I'd keep my eyes open for you. I'd make sure whatever street I went down I'd have to stand on the other side of the street when you came down, man. Al, why don't you get a guitar and put some of this energy to good use?

AW: But there's a need for someone like myself – no one else is doing the thing.

BD: But yer so extreme...

AW: Thanks.

BD: Off on one end – there's no one balancing the other end...

AW: How about lame rock critics...

BD: They're in the middle...

AW: Hey Bob, they all say I'm full of shit, Greil Marcus, Richie Goldstein, Christgau... They're all CORRUPT.

The sun had set & Dylan's wife had called him for dinner on the phone a couple of times. Bob gave me his phone number and asked me to call him when I'm on the radio or when something comes up.

AW: Ever hear me on the radio, Bob?

BD: Just a couple of times on Alex Bennett's Show – I dug it when he asked you if you had any personal messages for me. What do you think of Bob Fass?

AW: He's a revolutionary brother but he don't dig it when I attack you 'cause you were an old friend of his.

BD: Well, Al, so long, and one more thing – you're not going to get into my life.

AW: Why?

BD: If you do I might gain a soul.

AW: Is that a threat?

Talking to Dylan was like talking to a ghost. The old Dylan, full of ideas and stories was gone, replaced with a shell. It was also like talking to a con-man who was really conning himself. I know D's still into his CB & he was trying to cool me out by using his charisma & offering me his "friendship". Trying to co-opt me & the Dylan Liberation Front but we will fight on – till we win.

FREE BOB DYLAN
POWER TO THE PEOPLE

May/June 1971
Catherine Rosenheimer Interview, Herzliya, Israel

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 841-842.

Catherine Rosenheimer interviewed Dylan on the beach at Herzliya, near Jerusalem, sometime during May or June 1971 (Heylin states May 31st); her brief article appeared in the *Jerusalem Post Magazine* on June 4th 1971. The article has also been reprinted in Stephen Pickering's *Praxis: One*.

This story might be called "Dylan and the Detectives" – or perhaps the "Day of Dozens of Fruitless Phone Calls" – or even "Robert Zimmerman Incognito."

It all started with two lines in *The Jerusalem Post* "Arrivals" section the Sunday-before-last, reading "American folk singer Bob Dylan, for a short private holiday with Mrs. Dylan (by El Al)." Dylan protested to reporters at Lod Airport that he was amazed that they knew he was coming, that he was here strictly incognito and that he wouldn't talk to journalists anyway.

CBS Records, who have sentimental attachments towards Dylan, since his was one of the first LPs they released in Israel, knew nothing about his visit. They did a little rapid research, noted that May 24 was Dylan's 30th birthday and placed an advert in *The Post* wishing him Happy Birthday wherever he was, inviting him to call them if he felt like it. He didn't.

Back in Greenwich Village outside the Dylan family home all his fans were frenziedly celebrating his birthday, regardless of his absence. (Only his four children, their nanny and Sasha the dog were at home.) He spent his first couple of nights in a quiet anonymity at the Sharon Hotel, still firmly refusing to be interviewed and then gave them – not to speak of his travel agents – the slip too.

This reporter finally tracked down the elusive, reddish-haired, bearded Bob Dylan on Herzliya Beach bright and early one morning. Not that he was so easy to identify as one might have thought; glimpsed back view plunging in and out of the surf he looked remarkably like most of the other bathers braving the "Life-guards on Strike" warnings. Whatever else was not already evident, it became clear that he enjoyed the sea.

I can hardly claim to have received the warmest reception ever when he eventually emerged from the waves dripping, but he did talk – a little. In view of all the stories about his love of privacy, his hatred of journalists, it was all remarkably easy – not to speak of relaxed. Anecdotes about Dylan and the press include occasions like the one when, asked how his parents related to his becoming a singer, he replied that he didn't know his parents and they didn't know him; and there was the time when a reporter asked why he kept a bodyguard, to which came the answer **"to keep away people I don't care for – like you!"**

Perhaps he was just in the holiday mood. He was certainly polite, almost friendly, even if his manner was hardly conducive to a long conversation. "Where have you been?" was the opening – and obvious – question. **"Traveling around"** was the non-committal reply. North? South? **"All over the place – we've been here for a long time."** (It was then eight days, to be precise, though he did venture that had been here several times before. The purpose of the trip was, he-said, to collect material for what he calls **"my journal."** A journal to be published in book form it appears, including some songs too, to be released some time.

"Actually that's the main reason why we're here incognito – it's impossible to get down to work with dozens of people milling around you all the time," he ventured. **"Apart from which**

I didn't think my records were officially released here and so didn't want any publicity." I asked if there were likely to be any Israel-inspired songs as a result of his visit – no, but he had written one about Yugoslavia, he said with a smile.

As to official appearances in Israel, the answer was **"maybe."** He had seen CBS's birthday greetings **"but I doubt if they'd really like to see me – my next record won't be released through them in any case."** And how had spent his momentous 30th birthday: **"We went to see a Gregory Peck movie – I'm quite a fan of his,"** he said with a laugh.

Unsuccessful attempts at interviewing Bob Dylan of late have led to the publication of a number of stories in the local press regarding a certain Alan Jules Weberman. Weberman, who calls himself a "Dylanolog," whose life's work is to collect and file every item he can salvage from the dustbin which stands outside Dylan's house. He is also reportedly the compiler and proud possessor of a fat volume containing a complex cross reference on every word ever to have been used in Dylan's songs – all of which he knows by heart, needless to say.

Dylan confirms that Weberman has a remarkable collection of his garbage, but that there wasn't much he could do about it – **"We can't fence ourselves in – it's a family house with kids coming and going all the time."**

He had not, he said, seen the *Time* article on him, and was intrigued to hear what it said. What it said, among other things, was that he was **"thinking about"** changing his name back to the one he grew up with: Robert Allen Zimmerman; that, having become Dylan (out of his admiration for the poet Dylan Thomas) about nine years ago because **"I had a lot to run away from. Now I've got a lot to return to"**- he was **"returning to his Jewishness."** Rumors about changing his name were, he said, **"pure journalese and not a word of truth."** No comment was forthcoming about Time's report of his great admiration for the Jewish Defense League and Rabbi Meir Kehane.

January 1973
Michael Watts interview for *Melody Maker*, Mexico

Sources: *Melody Maker*, 3 February 1973, page 28
reprinted in *NME Originals: Bob Dylan and the Folk Rock Boom 1964-1974*, p. 122-123.

THE MAN CALLED ALIAS
Wearied by the music business, Dylan tries his hand at film acting and knife-throwing

The scene is Durango, a dusty mining town with the highest murder rate in Mexico. Here, Sam Peckinpah, master of super violence (*Wild Bunch*, *Straw Dogs*) is directing *Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid*. All eyes are on the man who plays Billy's sidekick. For the man is Bob Dylan, bringing to his first acting role a dedication which suggests he has found the new direction which has eluded him for so long.

It is more than two years since he made his last album, '*New Morning*', and there are apparently no plans for another solo venture. He has consistently intimated to friends that he is tired of the music business, and he takes little active part in it.

He is Bob Dylan. But who is Bob Dylan? As the myth of the musician and the generational symbol rises like creeping fog he casts about for a new purpose to it all.

He sees other pre-eminent musicians, like Lennon and Jagger, involved in movies. An old mentor is Andy Warhol. Down in Mexico, a newer friend, Kris Kristofferson, is starring in a film, as Billy The Kid.

Dylan was fascinated with the idea of a movie part as much as daunted. But he went down with Kristofferson's manager Bert Block to Mexico to exorcise his doubts. He was shown around the set. He was particularly captivated by the wardrobe of Western clothes, trying on the hats and costumes like a kid dressing for a fancy dress party.

He looked around for a while and then quietly picked up a guitar and sang a song he'd written about Billy The Kid to Kris and Coburn, and Peckinpah offered him a part there and then.

He plays, with the most fitting of poetic justices, the part of Alias. In the public life of the musician he is the man of uncertain identity. In the movies he is the man with no name.

Maggie Netter, an MGM publicist, tells me as we drive out on Saturday morning for the location site, El Sauz, that Dylan talks to no one, unless he wishes to.

"It's not just that he's picking on you, but, he's..." she searches for the right adjective, "he's just rude." Ah! The mucho mysterioso quality.

The car pulls into a large open space in front of the preserves of a big, crumbling stone building constructed as a cavalry fort some hundred years ago.

In one of the fort buildings, Peckinpah was shooting and rehearsing his actors. He was out of sight, but the authority in the voice left no doubt as to its identity.

"Dylan is great," Rudy Wurlitzer, the writer of the screenplay, told me as filming went on. "He's come down here to learn, he's turning in stuff, and it's been really impressive. I don't know what he really wants to do but I hope he would do his own film because he's an artist."

"The really interesting thing," he continued thoughtfully, "is what's going on between Dylan and Peckinpah. Sam is really Western, like an outlaw, looking to the wide open spaces. Dylan, you could say, was more Eastern. He brings a different point of view, especially to a Western. The part is small, but it's important in a funny sort of way. Do the two of them have any common ground? That's the big question."

On the nightly plane back to Mexico City, I sat across the aisle from Kris Kristofferson and we cradled a bottle of Jameson between us. And there, in the seat right beside him, was a little guy from Minnesota named Bob Dylan.

He was a whole era of youth coiled into one man, and now slowly winding down into the years past 30, and the consciousness of this had escaped no-one, least of all him, with his

eyes set straight and stonily to the front lest he be forced to pick up those curious sidelong glances, just as a magnet does iron filings.

As the plane was taking off, and I began to speak to Kristofferson, he got up jumpily from his seat and went to sit at the back.

We had begun to climb as he reluctantly dumped himself down again behind Kristofferson. He pulled his hat down right over his face, which was odd, because his body was rigidly upright in his seat, cocked and attentive.

"Listen," said Kristofferson as we touched down, "this guy can do anything. In the script, he has to throw a knife. It's real difficult. After 10 minutes or so, he could do it perfect."

I looked back at the crown of the straw hat in uncompromising full-frontal. I said I was too scared to talk to the man right now.

"Sheeeit, man!," Kristofferson roared, "You're scared? I'm scared, and I'm making a pitcher with him!"

I began to feel more than ever like the lead in '*Ballad Of A Thin Man*'.

They recorded until seven the following morning, Dylan's 'Billy The Kid' and some other stuff he'd written in Durango. On Monday morning, Bobby got on the plane and sat towards the back with a few empty seats around him. Kris and Rita Coolidge were right down the other end. About three-quarters of an hour out from Mexico City, he saw a newspaper guy get out of his seat, walk to Kristofferson and crouch next to him talking.

Kristofferson was saying "...I was just disgusted with him. He'd start a song and just keep changing it around. He had horn players, trumpets, and they didn't know a damn thing what they had to do because he couldn't make up his mind. I left about three. No, we haven't spoken today."

Dylan saw all this, he saw the guy go back to his seat. That was when he sidled cautiously down the aisle and nudged me abruptly in the shoulder.

"You with the *Melody Maker*?" he demanded. Surprised nod.

"Is Max Jones still working there?" Sure he was. Dylan gave Max Jones his first ever UK interview, for *Melody Maker*, ten years before.

Dylan talks in this light, soft voice with a husk to it. He is also terribly shy, which he largely masks by an air of alienation he throws around himself.

Disembarking from the plane, I found him in the bar, engrossed with a camera, at almost eight in the morning.

"It's not happening in London," I said, apropos a remark made on the plane.

"New York's the place. That's what John Lennon says," he says, focusing the lens.

"I saw *Eat The Document* there at the Whitney," I offer.

He looks directly at me.

"Do you know Howard (Alk, who co-edited the film with Dylan)**?"**

"No. Was it originally supposed to be like *Don't Look Back* before it was re-edited?"

"No, it couldn't be. We didn't have enough good footage. There was 40 hours of it, but the camera was jumping around all the time. That was the only stuff we could salvage."

"Would you go back and play in England ever?"

Silence. He turned three-quarters and carefully placed the cup on the counter. There was no answer. Instead, taking off at a sudden tangent, he said, **"Did you see *Fly*?"**

"You mean the one about the fly crawling up the wall for half an hour? No." We all laughed.

"Did you see *Hard On*?" he said suddenly.

"No, but I saw *Rape*, the one with the girl being chased."

He nodded.

"Warhol was making movies like that years ago. I prefer the stuff with Morrissey actually." I was trying not to sound smug.

He nodded again, then asked **"Did you see *Lonesome Cowboys*?"**

"No, but I saw *Heat*." It was getting to be quite funny. Every time he asked me he looked so intense.

***"Sylvia Miles*?"**

"Yeah."

Silence once more.

"Tell me, how can you stand it down here?"

"It's not too bad because I'm making a film. If I wasn't..." The sentence was chopped off because the producer had come up and told him he could get in the car.

The next day, nerves on the set were jagged. Dylan was being put through his paces in a crucial scene.

As the cameras rolled, Dylan was sitting on a chair surrounded by half a dozen ragged Mexican kids, strumming an acoustic.

On the far right of the scene, a cowboy was leaning on his horse. Billy The Kid and his gang were around a campfire on the left. There was a lot of laughing and tomfoolery.

Then Dylan rises. He's been playing nervously with a knife, turning it round in his hand. He walks a dozen paces towards the campfire as the cowboy on the horse shouts after him, "Hey, boy, what's your name?" as if he was a piece of dirt. He stops and faces round with the knife in his hand.

"Alias," he replies shortly. His knife taps against his leg.

"Alias what?" barks the horseman.

"Alias whatever you want," comes the rejoinder. The gang laugh.

"They just call him Alias," says one. His interrogator grunts.

There's the sound of muttering – and then, in a flashpoint that takes you by surprise, Dylan's arm arcs back with the knife, and a seated outlaw gargles in the back of his throat, knocked on his side with the force of the knife supposedly sticking through his neck.

"Cut," says Peckinpah. "Aaaaaaaaah!" goes all that escaping air in relief. "Print it," grins Block.

He leaves as some kind of musical Messiah, and returns, years later, as an actor playing a small part in a movie. Yet even before the film is finished, the questions mount. Will Dylan really turn away from music to concentrate more on films? Will he start making records again? Could he ever return to doing concerts? He's unwavering, however, in his refusal to relinquish any part of his private self to his public, and this seems destined to continue.

You ask who is Bob Dylan? He is Alias, Alias whatever you want.

Michael Watts

January 1974
Maureen Orth interview for *Newsweek*

Source: *Newsweek*, 14 January 1974, pp. 46-49.

Dylan—Rolling Again

Moments before Bob Dylan began his first concert appearance in eight years, the backstage area at Chicago Stadium last week was eerily quiet. Reporters, who had swarmed in from every continent, were barred—except a NEWSWEEK reporter. There were no wives, no groupies, no hangers-on. In one small room Dylan and members of his accompanying group, The Band, twanged a few chords. In another room someone had left Dylan a surreal set of props: grotesque rubber masks, a stovepipe hat, a Keystone Cop helmet—even a crown. But for this first concert of his heralded return, Dylan disdained the disguises.

When he stepped out onstage, the 32-year-old Dylan, the elusive, reclusive poet-songwriter whose songs of protest and love sparked, sensitized and inspired an entire generation, was the Dylan everyone remembered: skinny, hunched over, dressed simply in blue jeans and black wool shirt, an old muffler thrown round his neck. Time had filled out his face slightly and given his voice a strengthened authority.

This was not the teen-age Bob Dylan who in 1960 arrived in Greenwich Village from Hibbing, Minn., looking, as one critic wrote, like "a cross between a choirboy and a beatnik," and, given a push by Joan Baez, started a new era in America's pop music. For years, city kids had been sitting on the floors at parties, picking guitars and singing folk songs. Dylan took this urban-folk semitradition, married it to the emerging rock beat and turned out a stream of songs that told an uneasy young generation why the American dream had turned into "Desolation Row."

Like a poet laureate, in the early '60s Dylan found the words that expressed a prophecy and a state of mind: "A hard rain's gonna fall..." "Something's happening here. You don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?" "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows" (which gave the violent Weatherman group its name). Ironically, as if to mark the end of an era, on the day Dylan opened last week Federal Judge Julius Hoffman dismissed indictments against twelve Weathermen for their "days of rage" rampage in Chicago five years ago.

The question was: what was Dylan's new message for the '70s? To get the answer, 19,000 fans, many busing, hitchhiking or driving hundreds of miles, braved a freezing Chicago evening to see and hear the minstrel who withdrew in 1966 at the height of his fame, told the world to get lost and, like Garbo, raised the status of celebrity to myth. These people in the Chicago audience were not the screaming teeny-boppers who come to the saturnalias of the new pop stars like Alice Cooper. These were eager, expectant people, mostly in their 20s, who sat patiently as the house lights went down and only an occasional whiff of marijuana arose.

When Dylan finally walked calmly out, turned his back to the audience and began tuning up with Rick Danko, Levon Helm, Garth Hudson, Richard Manuel, Robbie Robertson—the gifted members of his original backup group, The Baud—the audience cheered him not with the demoniac sounds of Mick Jagger's vicarious street-fighting men, but with the healthy gladness of friends greeting a long-absent friend.

Dylan came on without gimmicks. His songs, at their best, were dynamite, cutting through the crowd like a laser beam the substance and mastery of the lyrics standing out in stark contrast to so much of the theatricality that has taken the place of music in today's rock world. Dylan and The Band did 28 songs—all vintage Dylan except for three new ones from his forthcoming album, "Planet Waves." Like pro athletes coming off a long layoff, their playing was ragged, almost deliberately unassuming.

But the mood changed in the second half of the show when Dylan—who never spoke during the concert except to announce the intermission—walked out alone, his black shirt

replaced by a snow-white tunic. When he picked up his acoustic guitar and began blowing his harmonica, Dylan started blowing a few-minds as well; when he wailed "The times they are a changin'" the audience roared. It was both a memory and a promise. When he sang "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll," the song about the death of a black woman killed by a cane carelessly thrown by a Maryland society snob who beat the rap "through high office relations in the state of Maryland," the reference to Spiro Agnew was perfectly clear.

He closed with "It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)." At the line "Even the President of the U.S. must have to stand naked," the crowd went wild. The lyrics even inspired one man to rip off his clothes and declare his Presidential candidacy on the spot. He was immediately tackled by rock impresario Bill Graham, producer of the tour, who had earlier worried that things were "going too smoothly." When Dylan finished, thousands in the crowd lit matches and, holding them up like tiny torches, begged him to come back. He reappeared for a finale with The Band, and the last song seemed to carry a certain message:

Time will tell who was fell
And who was left behind,
When you go your way
And I go mine.

Dylan spat out the final words like a challenge. After eight long years the most important single personality in the American popular culture of his generation was back.

"This event is the biggest thing of its kind in the history of show business," modestly declared David Geffen. the 30-year-old human dynamo, "Record Executive of the Year," chairman of the board of Elektra/Asylum Records, who just pulled off one of the great coups in the music business—signing Dylan away from Columbia Records. When newspapers carried an ad last Dec. 2 saying Dylan and The Band would be touring 21 cities for six weeks in January and February, the post office was Hooded with millions of envelopes.

Only mail orders were accepted because Dylan wanted all age groups to have an equal chance to hear him, not just the kids who would stand in line at the box office for days before. Even so, the scramble for tickets has become frantic, including magazine ads offering bodies in exchange for tickets and scattered instances of counterfeiting. The total concert capacity was 658,000, and Geffen estimated 2 million to 3 million envelopes were sent back. With prices as high as $9.50 and $10.50, the concerts will gross a cool $5 million.

Since Dylan long ago became a millionaire, it would be downright vulgar to consider money as a motive for his return. He says he just wanted to hear good music. But whose? **"If there was something else out there to really give you a kick,"** declares Dylan, **"I would have thought differently about doing this. What I want to hear I can't hear so I have to make it myself."** "Bob's a street cat," says his friend Barry Feinstein. "It's not good for him to he off the street." Dylan has astrological reasons as well. **"Saturn has been an obstacle in my planetary system,"** he explains. **"It's been there for the last few ages and just removed itself from my system. I feel free and unburdened."**

There are other hypotheses about his return. Super-Dylanologist A.J. Weberman, who became famous by going through Dylan's garbage cans for relics of Saint Bob, now thinks the tour smells suspiciously like a Zionist plot. "He's doing it now because of the war in the Middle East," Weberman insists. "He is an ultra Zionist. He is doing the tour to raise money for Israel. He has given large sums of money to Israel in the name of Abraham Zimmerman [Dylan's father's name]. He's very ethno-oriented." **"I got blue eyes,"** says Dylan. **"I don't know how Jewish that is."**

Dylan's motives for doing anything have always been questioned by his idolatrous masses, and after a near-fatal motorcycle accident in 1966 he withdrew into seclusion in Woodstock, N.Y., with his wife, Sarah, emerging just four times to perform, most notably at the concert for Bangladesh. Since then he has shunned interviews, occasionally released albums,

popped up in Sam Peckinpah's film "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid" and moved with his family from Woodstock to the beach at Malibu.

More important than Dylan's own motives for coming back, which are obviously as mixed as anybody's from Frank Sinatra to Muhammad Ali, are the expectations of his fans. Typical of these is Jim Krizmanich, a 28-year-old part-time builder of geodesic domes who came all the way from Indianapolis to Chicago to see the Dylan concert. His face stubbled, his hair uncombed. Krizmanich explains that he intends to see at least thirteen of the concerts around the country. "I just really like the man," he told NEWSWEEK's Martin Weston, "but he's not a god; more like a genius."

Like Krizmanich, 17-year-old Andrea Deedrick has about a hundred Dylan records and tapes, including many of the pirated recordings that have become collectors' items. Andrea came from Milwaukee with a girlfriend—and her mother and father, a 47-year-old, dark-suited advertising executive. "You couldn't classify my wife and myself as rock freaks," says Don Deedrick, "bul Dylan isn't Tin Pan Alley stuff. The difference accept the protest of the '60s at the time," says Andrea's mother, Mrs. Valerie Deedrick. "Dylan was disgusted with parts of society as we all were, but he put it into music. He helped to bring a lot of my generation around to realizing some of the falseness in our society."

But for Andrea, Dylan's message isn't in the lyrics. "He's been important to me for so long," she says. "I don't get deep messages, I just get a mood." A budding painter, she has portrayed Dylan several times. "I just know him by heart, like most of his songs. I think he's the most important musician who ever lived—more important than Ludwig van Beethoven."

But there was no doubt that the older people at the concert, like Andrea's parents, were hoping for something new to chew on from Dylan. "I'm looking for a sign or a message in his coming back," says musician Mark Fishman of Milwaukee. "I think this is the start of a new era. In the fourth year of each decade since '54 a new era of music has started in America. In '54 it was Elvis, in '64 the Beatles, and we're all waiting to see if it happens again." Painter Ronald Oeller of Phoenix, Ariz., has similar expectations. "I've seen Dylan influence music, clothing, hair and everything else." says Oeller. "I'm looking for something new again. He's a leader, a pacesetter."

Back in his hotel suite after his performance, in the company of a longtime high-school friend, Louie Hern, who knows him from Hibbing days when he was Bobby Zimmerman, Dylan is quietly watching an old Western on TV. The wool muffler is still wound around his neck. In person he's not nearly so hard-looking as his photographs—he seems almost fragile. A little later when everyone has gone, Dylan is remote but not unfriendly.

He feels good about his performance. **"It's as natural for me to do it as for a fish to swim,"** declares Dylan. **"It felt just like yesterday pounding the streets."** Musically, he says, he doesn't consider his taste a part of the nostalgia so fashionable today in pop. **"I just carry that other time around with me,"** he says. **"The music of the late '50s and early '60s when music was at that root level—that for me is meaningful music. The singers and musicians I grew up with transcend nostalgia—Buddy Holly and Johnny Ace are just as valid to me today as then."**

Any thoughts of taking up the mantle again for a new generation are also quickie dispelled. **"I am not looking to be that now messiah. That's not in the cards for me. That's all over, that's the past. I like the way Van Morrison sings it: 'You know I just can't help you now. It's not my job at all.' I go deep and far out to get my songs—that's what it is, there's no more than that."**

Dylan made his original impact on a generation in which **"nobody was thinking about anything. Now there's so much going on everybody's thinking the same things. There's a new generation of people now, a new time,"** he says. **"My father had to sweat. My father lived in a lot of pain. In this earthly body he didn't transcend the pain. I've transcended that pain, the pain of material things."** It helps to be a millionaire, doesn't it? **"I'd be doing what I'm doing if I was a millionaire or not, whether I was getting paid for it or not. In the '60s there was a certain bunch of us who came through the wars. There was a lot of death during that time.**

The '60s were filled with it. It has helped me to grow up. The '70s are more realistic, but the '60s exposed the roots of that realism."

The thought that he is an "idol" makes him uncomfortable. **"Idols are old hat. They aren't people, they're objects. But I'm no object,"** insists Dylan. **"When we think of idols we think of those carved pieces of wood and stone people can relate to—that's what an idol is. They do the same thing to someone like Marlon Brando—they attach themselves to certain people because of a need. But I'm just doing exactly what a lot of other people would be doing if they could. I'm not standing at an altar, I'm working in the marketplace."**

When Dylan mentions the marketplace he knows what he is talking about. He is one of the two or three most valuable properties in the multimillion-dollar-a-year pop-music business. Columbia Records, his previous label, was not unaware of this situation. When Dylan's contract with Columbia Records ran out last year he did not renew it, switching to Asylum instead. Columbia immediately got up an album filled with Dylan "outtakes" he had discarded in the studio long ago. Columbia promised Dylan that if he re-signed with them the album would not be released. He didn't and it was.

When Dylan and The Band decided to go on tour, they worried at first that their brand of music wasn't enough to impress a new audience of people used to seeing the theatrics of "decadent" rock stars like Alice Cooper or David Bowie. And they hadn't forgotten Dylan's hectic, less than triumphant tour in 1965, when, said lead guitarist Robbie Robertson last week, "we were booed off of every stage in Europe. What happened tonight in Chicago is so reassuring for us. We don't have any fancy outfits or sparklers on our eyes, and we don't cut off any heads. I mean how many times can you set yourself on fire or rip off your shirt?"

Dylan's direct, straightforward appeal to an audience is related to his celebrated reluctance to allow the media to interpret him to the public. **"I've never bargained to be accessible to the press or the media,"** Dylan declares. **"They've yet to find anything that they're gonna get from me. What I do is direct contact between me and the people who hear the songs and that goes right to the heart of the matter. It doesn't need a translator."**

But Dylan has his own kind of charm, which he can turn on even in the presence of the media. He walks around his hotel room balancing a straw boater on his head, reacting enthusiastically to stories about country singers, such as Dolly Parton's armory of wigs. He talks about books—especially books that have the word solitude in their titles—"*A Hundred Years of Solitude*." "*A Woman Called Solitude*."

When the reviews of his concert came in, he read them eagerly. **"Wow,"** he exclaimed as he looked over the Chicago papers (which were generally raves), **"this guy thinks '*Forever Young*'** [a song from Dylan's forthcoming album that's a kind of prayer to his children] **will be big on high-school and college campuses."** Dylan shook his head in genuine disbelief. **"Now how could he say a thing like that?"** Another column suggests that Dylan, just by dropping in, tore a local club apart. **"Hey, let's call all the newspapers and say Bob Dylan is coming! We'll meet 'em on a street corner! Call the TV cameras!"**

Dylan, shy, evasive, wary of "profundity" and of claims on his privacy, nevertheless is an artist in close contact with his audience. He sang *"The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll"* opening night because a man from his hometown had written him a letter reminding him how relevant that song was to today's politics. But feeling a responsibility toward his fans is another matter. **"There's the hard core and the curious,"** he says. **"I'm not surprised by the response we've had for tickets to the tour, but I wouldn't be surprised if they only sold 1,000 tickets. I give out a hard dose—like penicillin. People don't have to worry if Dylan's conning them. If it works, it works. If they don't like it, they don't have to try the dose again."**

As an artist Dylan seems to have found confidence. As a performer he's more relaxed. **"A lot of the nervousness has gone. I used to feel nervous all the time before I went onstage."** As a husband and father (five children), he has found profound love.

Dylan has come back at a time when our society is starved for heroes. His problem is he doesn't want to be a hero any more. He's singing his songs in his old way, and to many in 1974 they sound fresh and welcome—daring people to think about things few of the leaders of

the '70s are talking about. But this doesn't seem like the moment when a singer, no matter how charismatic, is going to change people's consciousness. A minstrel cannot compete with the whip-saw of reality in the '70s. Maybe Bob Dylan should be treated as he wants to be—as a musician pure and simple. It may be that he himself is still "a rolling stone," looking for something. As he sings in a new song:

There are those who worship loneliness—
I'm not one of them.
in this age of fiber glass
I'm searching for a gem.

—MAUREEN ORTH

7 January 1974
John Rockwell Interview

Source: *Younger Than That Now* by Thunder's Mouth Press, 2004. pp. 91-94.

TOUR'S ROARING OVATIONS LEAVE DYLAN QUIETLY PLEASED
John Rockwell

PHILADELPHIA, JAN. 7-BOB DYLAN, dressed in jeans, a zippered sweatshirt and a fur hat sat barefooted and cross-legged on the living room couch of a suite in the Sheraton Hotel this afternoon, wiping sleep from his eyes and gradually overcoming a certain frog-throatedness usually associated with the early morning hours.

Then, in one of his rare press interviews, he discussed the enthusiastic response to his current national tour, his first in eight years.

"Now that it's happened, it pleases me," he said. **"But if it hadn't happened, it wouldn't have disappointed me either. Being on tour is like being in limbo. It's like going from nowhere to nowhere."**

AUDIENCES ARE GOOD

"But at least the audiences are different. The audiences on this tour have been very warm," he said. **"Chicago's always good. But on our last tour Stockholm and London and New York and Austin—we are not making it to Austin on this trip—they were good, too. After we finish this we'll sit down and decide what we're going to do next. Maybe we'll go to Europe."**

The mood among those associated with the nationwide Dylan tour that began last Thursday in Chicago might best be described as prudently euphoric. David Geffen of Elektra/Asylum Records, who brought Mr. Dylan and the Band back together for the occasion, calls the reception at the first four concerts "fantastic." Robbie Robertson, lead guitarist and spokesman for the Band, says it's been "incredible." And even Mr. Dylan, who appears to be moving cautiously but surely out of the reclusive shell he had built up around himself, is obviously pleased.

AVOIDED PRESS

Mr. Dylan has avoided interviews in recent years. **"I used to feel used by the press, but that was because no one was in control of it for me."**

As he answered questions in Mr. Geffen's suite in the hotel today, however, he was friendly and straightforward, if still ultimately guarded in his responses.

Mr. Robertson, talking later in his own room, wasn't so calm. "The ticket orders and the audience response have been just great," he says. "We've all been waiting a long time, especially Bob. And when we finally get there, to have it be a disappointment would have been really heartbreaking. But it's been wonderful."

"The last tour we did, in 1965-66, was like a hurricane," Mr. Dylan recalled. **"This one is more like a hard rain. The last tour, we were going all the time, even when we weren't going. We were always doing something else, which is just as draining as performing. We were looking for Loch Ness monsters, staying up for four days running—and making all those 8 o'clock curtains, besides. There won't be any of that on this tour—for me, anyway."**

Mr. Dylan is obviously not personally sympathetic to the glitter-rock phenomenon that has become popular in rock of late. Although he says he has **"no feelings"** about the glitter rockers, he does offer on reflection that he likes David Bowie—**"He probably got started listening to us, back in '65 or '66"**—and even Alice Cooper—**"good, basic rock n' roll."**

Mr. Robertson is more explicit in his distaste. "It's heartening—the audiences' response so far. We don't take our clothes off, or hang ourselves onstage, or paint our hair. We don't

have anything to offer but the music. We are not a bunch of cutie-pies; we're grown-up people."

The current tour repertory has been drawn from a group of about 50 Dylan songs that Mr. Dylan and the Band ran through loosely together last November and December in Malibu, Calif. **"We've tried to do as much as possible,"** Mr. Dylan offers.

"We want to keep things fresh," Mr. Robertson adds. "There aren't any arrangements as such of any of the Dylan songs we are doing. There's no set beginning, or end, or key. We just play along together, and hope it comes out right."

Mr. Dylan has been experimenting with additions to the program and with the format at every concert, and plans to continue with that experimentation. He says he was surprised at the roaring ovations that have greeted the beginning and end of his solo acoustic sets, but says he doesn't plan to expand that portion beyond the present five or six numbers. Mr. Robertson says the Band will eventually begin introducing some new original songs, definitely by the New York dates late this month.

Mr. Dylan admits to being pleased about the way his new Asylum album, *Planet Waves,* has turned out, and Mr. Geffen—understandably but apparently genuinely—waxes downright lyrical about it.

"I particularly like the song 'Something There Is About You,'" Mr. Dylan said. **"It completes a circle for me, about certain things running through my pattern. But I think they are all good,"** he added quickly. **"I don't play favorites."**

"I still write songs the same way I always did: I get a first line, the words and the tune together, and then I work out the rest wherever I happen to be, whenever I have time. If it's really important, I'll just make the time and try to finish it. I do write less songs now than I used to, though. Seems like I do a lot less of everything now. Although yes, family life [Mr. Dylan and his wife, Sara, have five children]**—that takes its part, too."**

The thought of his performances in the New York area—Jan. 28 and 29 at the Nassau Coliseum on Long Island and three shows Jan. 30 and 31 at Madison Square Garden—brings a smile. **"Oh, I love New York,"** he says. **"I'm not really livin' in Los Angeles—we're just passin' through. I'm gonna have places all over."**

Although he says his neck is still sometimes affected by the weather since his near-fatal motorcycle accident in 1966, Mr. Dylan is clearly sanguine about his life these days, and appears genuinely glad that his days as a cult hero seem to be over.

"It had to be somebody, and it happened to be me. I just picked this suit of cards—or it was handed to me. Now I want to do a lot of different things. I'd like eventually to make my own kind of movie, but first I'll have to do two or three more to get into 'em. Eventually, my turn will come."

"And I'd like to put out a book of my drawings, and later on maybe retire to a ranch some day. What part of the country? Why, I don't even know what country. Whatever happens will just happen by itself."

12 January 1974
Ben Fong-Torres Interview, Montreal, Canada

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 177-181.

The interview was conducted January 12th in Dylan's room at the Chateau Champlain hotel in Montreal, the day of Dylan's second concert at the Montreal Forum. It appeared in Rolling Stone on February 14th 1974 and was re-issued in the *Rolling Stone* book *Knockin' On Dylan's Door*.

BF: You seem to respond to the audiences in your selection of the material. In the first show in Chicago you began with *Hero Blues*, which wasn't familiar to a lot of the audience, and you and the Band took turns on songs. Now you're doing six straight... standards to begin with. How do you decide what songs to do each show?

BD: Well, it's more interesting for me to be able to move things around. We chose songs that were important for us, for me, for people we knew. They're mostly the songs that've been recorded through the years.

BF: You haven't done any from *Self Portrait* so far.

BD: I didn't live with those songs for too long. Those were just scraped together.

BF: To, say, make a point or pay tribute to songwriters you liked?

BD: Yes.

BF: What about the Dylan album? I've heard the songs were mostly outtakes from the *Self Portrait* sessions.

BD: They were just not to be used. I thought it was well understood. They were just to warm up for a tune.

BF: Does Columbia have much more such material?

BD: Columbia has a lot of outtakes, but most of them have been bootlegged, I think. [Pause, returning to the Dylan album:] **I didn't think it was that bad, really!** [Laughs]

BF: Rolling Stone seems to stand out in the shows as a song that's celebrated more than listened to, and you seem to go along with that response.

BD: It's just as real today as it was then. The audience is reacting the same as back then. It was always the one that got the best reaction.

BF: Rolling Stone is the finale, and you seem to have begun using *You Go Your Way (I'll Go Mine)* as both opener and final encore. Any special reason?

BD: You Go Your Way completes a circle in some way.

BF: The tour seemed to get looser as it got to Canada. There was even mention of you on a station in Toronto that more or less claimed you as a Canadian citizen – or at least a man from the North Country of the U. S., close to Canada.

BD: Canada seems to bridge a gap between the United States and Europe – and England. It's a certain flair. And this is where I come from, this kind of setting – lakes and boats and bridges. [Looks out the hotel room window at the snowy scenery]

BF: I heard you've been reading the reviews on the shows so far, and several of them seemed disappointed at you for not... reaching out more to the audiences. They say you won't say anything and don't seem willing to respond to the emotional receptions you're getting.

BD: They just don't understand. It's got nothing to do with that kind of atmosphere. What they [the critics] **expect is what they expect. It concerns me more with getting it to the people. It's basically music, not a music-hall routine.**

BF: Some people also wondered why you're playing such huge places.

BD: I let other people decide that. I just let people know I was ready. Put it in Bill Graham's hands. Originally I wanted to play small halls, but I was just talked out of that.

BF: Is this new activity on your part timed at all? I mean, people sense a significance to your returning at this time, given the state of the music business and the state of the country.

BD: Well, it wasn't planned... I saw daylight; I took off.

BF: Over the past seven or eight years, did you miss being on stage?

BD: Sure. There's always those butterflies at a certain point, but then there's the realization that the songs I'm singing mean as much to the people as to me, so it's just up to me to perform the best I can.

BF: You've said that you weren't a spokesman, that "that's in the past". Now you're singing the "message" songs again. Why, and what do you feel, singing the protest songs, now?

BD: For me, it's just reinforcing those images in my head that were there, that don't die, that will be there tomorrow, and in doing so for myself, hopefully also for those people.

BF: You told me the other night that you were especially looking forward to being in Texas. Why?

BD: They're more receptive to my kind of music, my kind of style. In the old days... I hate to call them the old days [laughs]**, I did New York, San Francisco and Austin. The rest were hard in coming. Maybe it's just the Mexican influence.**

BF: Will you play in Mexico someday?

BD: I wanted to play Mexico, but it was hard to re-route the whole tour. I also want to play South America sometime.

BF: You made a reference to astrology in explaining – in *Newsweek* – why you were back on the road. [**"Saturn has been an obstacle in my planetary system. It's been there for the last few ages and just removed itself from my system. I feel free and unburdened."**] What's your interest in astrology?

BD: I can't read anybody's chart, but the thing about Saturn is, I don't know what it was at the time or I would've gone somewhere away. It's a big, heavy obstacle that comes into your chain of events, that fucks you up in a big way. Came into my chart a few years ago and just flew off again a couple of months ago.

BF: Who told you about Saturn's existence?

BD: Someone very dear to me told me.

BF: Is Malibu pretty much your home now?

BD: We're just there temporarily. It was cold in New York and we didn't want to go back there after Mexico. I can't stay away from New York.

BF: You've done six concerts now and your voice seems to be holding up pretty well.

BD: We've been through the big tours before. Actually, I'd like to have a little club where I could go and sing when I felt like it.

BF: Why does your voice change so much? From the country albums to *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid* to the way you sound on tour...

BD: [Reflective pause]... **That's a good question. I don't know. I could only guess, if it has changed. I've never gone for having a great voice, for cultivating one. I'm still not doing it now.**

BF: Maybe people say your voice has changed because of your reworking or rearranging well-known songs like *Lay Lady Lay*.

BD: You'll always stretch things out or cut it up, just to keep interested. If you can't stay interested that way, you'll have to lose track. But I'm me now. That's the way it comes out.

BF: You're meaner now?

BD: Yeah.

BF: How are you meaner these days?

BD: Oh – no, I said, "I'm me now."

BF: Well! I already had the headline made up: "Dylan beats kids. 'I'm meaner now!'" I'd like to ask you about the rumors about your giving some of the profits from this tour to the Israeli war effort. One rumor has it that you're sending money in your father's name, and you've been characterized as an "ultra-Zionist."

BD: I'm not sure what a Zionist really is. I don't know how those things get started, really. It's just gossip.

BF: Maybe so, but people do wonder about what religion means to you.

BD: Religion to me is a fleeting thing. Can't nail it down. It's in me and out of me.

BF: But it seems to be "in" you enough for religious images to become parts of your songs.

BD: It does give me, on the surface, some images, but I don't know to what degree. Like Da Vinci going in to paint the Last Supper. Until he finishes it, no one knows what the Last Supper is. He goes out and finds twelve guys, puts them around his table, and there's your Last Supper. Or Moses. He found a guy and painted him, and forever, that guy will be Moses. But why Moses or the Last Supper? Why not a flower? Or a tree?

BF: Aside from religion, people talk about how you're now a family man, how you've mellowed out, and how all that has affected your music.

BD: Yeah to a degree. But those things don't make a person settle down. A family brings the world together. You can see it's all one. Paints a better picture than being with a chick and traveling all over the world or hanging out all night. [Phone rings; Dylan answers, talks for a few seconds and hangs up] **But I still get that spark. Fame threw me for a loop at first. Until I learned how to swim with it and until I learned to turn it around – so you can just throw it in the closet and pick it up when you need it... I'm still out there. In no way am I not. I don't live on a pedestal.**

BF: When did you learn to turn it around?

BD: The turning point was back in Woodstock. A little after the accident. Sitting around one night under a full moon, looked out into the bleak woods and I said, "Something's gotta change." There was some business that had to be taken care of that we don't have to go into. But it was too much. It finally broke the camels back. Now it's the same old me again.

BF: In *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*, do you think that you pretty much played the role of Dylan?

BD: I don't know who I played. I tried to play whoever it was in the story, but I guess it's a known fact that there was nobody in that story that was the character I played.

BF: Would you like to be a movie star?

BD: I'm not a movie star, but I've got a vision to put up on the screen. Someday we'll get around to doing it. The Peckinpah experience was valuable in terms of getting near the big action.

BF: Will you do a couple of films on your own before producing the "vision"?

BD: The Peckinpah movie brought me as close as I'll get. I've been on sets of movies and TV shows, but they were small-time compared. They spent $4, $5 million on *Billy The Kid*, had all the top people. So that was really heavy. Gave me that vibration. When I finally do mine, it'll have that vibration.

BF: How'd you happen to get involved in *Billy The Kid*?

BD: Just one thing into another. [Pause] **They took me on because I was a big name.**

BF: How'd you feel, seeing the rushes of your scenes?

BD: I've seen myself on screen [*Dont Look Back*, *Eat the Document*]**. Movies don't impress me. That part didn't scare me off at all. Just hoped I didn't get shot during the movie!**

BF: What about *Ashes and Sand*, the label you were starting yourself?

BD: It only lasted a quick few minutes.

BF: Whose idea was it for you to have your own label?

BD: I advised myself it was a good thing, and then I advised myself that it wasn't. I just didn't need it.

BF: You were going to sign new artists. I hear you're interested in Leon Redbone, that you talked with his agent in Toronto.

BD: Leon interests me. I've heard he's anywhere from 25 to 60. I've been this close [indicates afoot] **to him, and I can't tell. If I had a label I'd want him. He does old Jimmy Rodgers, then turns around and does a Robert Johnson.**

BF: Who else have you seen that you like?

BD: A couple of guys in Chicago were good – Mickey Clark and another Mickey.

BF: You told *Newsweek* that there's a new generation, that "everybody's thinking the same thing." Basically, that this isn't a time when we need protest songs. I was talking to a member of the Committee back in San Francisco who said there's still a need to get people to come around, that someone out there elected Nixon again after four years and continues to support him, through Watergate. Do you really believe that "everybody's thinking the same thing" and that you no longer need to write "message" songs?

BD: There's still a message. But the same electric spark that went off back then could still go off again – the spark that led to nothing. Our kids will probably protest, too. Protest is an old thing. Sometimes protest is deeper or different – the Haymarket Square or the Russian Revolution. The Civil War, that's protest. There's always a need for protest songs. You just gotta tap it.

BF: What did you think of CBS firing Clive Davis?

BD: I thought he was a scapegoat.

BF: He was trying to re-sign you when he left. If he were still at Columbia, might you have signed with them again?

BD: He would've made no difference.

BF: Why did you leave CBS?

BD: It was long overdue. Just a feeling it was time to go on. A gut feeling. Suspected they were doing more talk than action. Just released 'em and that's all. Got a feeling they didn't care whether I stayed there or not.

BF: Why did you choose to go with David Geffen and Asylum Records?

BD: He's there. Columbia's not there.

BF: What's "there"?

BD: Whatever it takes to be there.

BF: Are you actually signed, by contract, to Asylum?

BD: I'm not so sure we signed one. I don't sign anything these days.

BF: What about your work with Leon Russell? You did only a couple of things with him.

BD: The producers that have meant the most to me are Tom Wilson, John Hammond, and Bob Johnston. They were there. They were there when... well, it's like a small group of friends. Leon and I, we didn't do that much. [Dylan couldn't remember how many songs they had produced together.] **It went fine. It was as good as it could have been expected to be.**

January 1974
David DeVoss interview for *Time* magazine

Source: *Time* magazine, 21 January 1974

Monday, Jan. 21, 1974
DYLAN: ONCE AGAIN, IT'S ALRIGHT MA

Only an aquiline nose and a pair of scuffy cheeks peeked out from behind the purdah of colored glasses, gray muffler, and hotel towel anchored Arab-style by a pillbox chapeau. But the imperious stare, the twitching extremities and the spindly silhouette of Bob Dylan, 32, belied the Bedouin disguise. The erstwhile revolutionary folkie, rock n' roll innovator and countrified cop-out was back after an eight-year absence from concert touring. Perched atop a hotel couch in Philadelphia (the second of 21 cities in his current six-week tour), Dylan was solidly re-ensconced as the reigning song-poet laureate of young America.

With him was TIME Correspondent David DeVoss, 26, a member of the generation that grew up on Dylan's songs and that is now returning to auditoriums and stadiums for a historical second look. De Voss's report:

"All this publicity," Dylan sniffed tiredly, following two performances in a single day. **"Sometimes I think they're talking about somebody else. I take it as it comes, but I'm not certain it's beneficial to my life."** He paused to rub a bare foot against his faded jeans.

For thousands of young Americans, Bob Dylan is one of the very few personalities to emerge intact from the '60s whirlwind. A vindicated Cassandra who, in crystallizing once vague discontents, transformed dissent from an intellectual hobby to a public cause, Dylan sang about the turmoil of a generation. The generation listened. Now it remembers.

Thus far on the tour, Dylan's concerts have taken on the panoply of clan reunions. Hours before his scheduled appearance, stadium parking lots become agoras for hundreds who browse about looking at Dylan T shirts, posters and songbooks hawked by local vendors. They are subdued crowds—"laid back" in the vernacular of the present—but once inside they unite to buffet Dylan with waves of applause after each song. Roaring pleas for encores and repeated standing ovations are standard features. Lighted matches, signifying the rebirth of Woodstock solidarity, are regularly held aloft.

Never in the history of American rock has a tour aroused so much public interest. Within hours after mailorder tickets were put on sale, more than 5,000,000 letters, each requesting an average of three tickets, inundated post offices along the tour route. One trade paper calculated that 7.5% of the population of the U.S. had requested tickets to see Dylan and his bluesy bayou back-up group, the Band. In Los Angeles County, the 18,700-seat Forum received about 300,000 ticket requests. In New York City, Dylan followers seeking 12:01 a.m. postmarks on first-come, first-served mail orders created frantic midnight rushes. Frazzled promoters in San Francisco, faced with an ever-growing mountain of mail, finally bought newspaper ads imploring: "Please, no more mail orders."

Most performers would be elated, but Dylan, emerging from his isolation, is almost indifferent. **"I try not to deal with the audience response,"** he said. **"Too synthetic. Besides, it would be more than I could handle. I'm just basically interested in real things."**

Still, it is quite a triumph for somebody who set out from Minnesota in 1961 on a pilgrimage to the bed of the dying Woody Guthrie, his only ambition to “make it big.” The fact that along the way Dylan became an oracle was almost accidental, involuntary. While his musical contemporaries were becoming mirrors of society, Dylan, almost in spite of himself, became its conscience, a reluctant Eumenide. Instead of warbling teen-age love songs, he wrote about bigotry, nuclear destruction, war profiteers and social desolation. Dylan was background for a campus rap session, inspiration for an essay. He was the brooding presence uniting thousands of unsatisfied students, a pioneer who purged the inanities from popular music with surrealistic epigrams and metaphysical subtleties.

“When I first took my music on the road back in ‘60, it was in search of something else that wasn’t being covered,” Dylan said last week in a rare interview. **“I let it happen by itself, and it grew and matured by itself. Everybody has matured, musicians included. A lot of these people** [referring to his followers] **and myself have a great deal in common. As for the music... I just let the rope out.”**

Nasal Howl. From the moment they shamble onstage to begin their low-key performance, Dylan and the Band are in complete control of the audience. Dylan’s early folk-rock numbers, punctuated by Band standards like The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down and Up on Cripple Creek, are knocked out with an almost blase professionalism. But if Dylan is short on emotion, he makes up for it in energy. Shouting into the microphone in his haunting nasal howl, he spits out his message like a cobra. Since neither the performers nor the songs need introduction, there is no chatter between numbers. Dylan’s acknowledgment of the audience is slight: a simple bow from the waist after each song and a terse announcement of the intermission.

After the break, he walks on, sometimes clad in shining white denim, for a solo set of songs accompanied by his own acoustical guitar and ubiquitous harmonica. It is the most exciting part of the show. Dylan, his halo of curly hair limned by the iridescent hues of the stage lights, is greeted by thunderous cheers. After four or five of his early ballads, he is again joined by the Band for a crescendo of electrified folk-rock songs studded with powerful guitar riffs. From then on, the shouting seldom stops.

For those of us who first grasped for maturity during the decade past, a Dylan concert is a three-hour detour through deja vu. Like images on Plato’s cave, Clearasil coeds with Joan Baez hair and men silently hunkered inside thick pea jackets appear and quickly pass— yesterday’s graduate students, now headed toward paunch or pregnancy. Dylan concerts draw people who inhabited the fringes of campus teach-ins, rode Mississippi freedom buses and marched down endless University Avenues searching for an end to the draft.

Both Dylan and his followers have mellowed. The angry faces of the ’60s are softer now, and evidences of the future generations we were trying to save can occasionally be seen toddling along the crowded aisles. The arrogance of both poet and pupils is diminished, but the lyrics of songs like A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall, Mr. Tambourine Man and Desolation Row have grown in potency. Adult perspective makes songs, like My Back Pages, more meaningful:

Yes, my guard stood hard when abstract threats / Too noble to neglect / Deceived me into thinking I had something to protect / Good and bad. I define these terms / Quite clear, no doubt, somehow. / Ah, but I was so much older then I’m younger than that now.

“He’s all of us,” cried one Pittsburgh coed, as she hurried for the subway after one of Dylan’s concerts in Philadelphia. “He’s all the things we always felt but could never eloquently express.”

Dylan's eloquence stems partly from a salutary imprecision. His throbbing harmonica, Delphic imagery and occasional Chaplinesque two-step are constants, but his message, like the times, is continually changing. **"This show is definitely not nostalgia,"** he whispered last week between silences and long stares. **"To my mind, I deal with certain problems. It's an up-to-date show."**

In ending his exile, Dylan once more takes up his subtle revolution. His fans, nurtured on unstructured polemic and cinema verite, are being invited on a new journey, and if their expectant faces are to be believed, they are ready to follow. Each night on the tour, Dylan receives an ovation when he sings the line, "But even the President of the United States sometimes must have to stand naked," from It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding). In Dirge, a song from his soon-to-be-released album Planet Waves, his forceful lyrics are an eloquent, melancholy study of an individual searching for a niche in an anonymous society dominated by "progress."

I hate that foolish game we played / And the need that was expressed / And the mercy that you showed to me / Who ever would have guessed / I went out on lower Broadway / And I felt that place within / That hollow place where martyrs weep / And angels play with sin.

Yet the thrust of his performances is one of cautious optimism: a guarded belief that conditions can improve. In Forever Young, he says:

May your hands always be busy / May your feet always be swift / May you have a strong foundation / When the winds of changes shift / May your heart always be joyful / May your song always be sung / May you stay forever young.

They were exciting iconoclastic times, those'60s. "We"—the baby boomers—had the schools, the attention of the media, a good proportion of the nation's disposable income, and most important, we had a distinct music. The strange new sound of folk rock took over radio. Soon the white-middle-class blues, a lament where computers and corporations replaced landlords and scabs, was stirring an entire society.

A higher reality was at hand, but like a burst of light in a dark room, it proved to be illusory. Poverty programs, free universities and Camelot gave way to Kent State, Cambodia and urban terrorism. The toll of death and deterioration set in: The Kennedys, King, Dak To, Khe Sanh, Watergate. The clenched fist replaced the V sign as idealists turned cynical. Dylan and his followers withdrew into a more personal and private world. After a near-fatal motorcycle accident in 1966, Dylan moved to his home in Woodstock, N.Y., and switched from participant to observer to chronicle the halcyon days of "the movement" in songs like Time Passes Slowly.

Time passes slowly up here in the mountains, / We sit beside bridges and walk beside fountains, / Catch the wild fishes that float through the stream, / Time passes slowly when you're lost in a dream.

A generation of activists grew apathetic: the old spirit of Dylan and Joan Baez seemed to have evaporated. The stage was taken over by a capering rearguard of glitter rockers, demonists and hip vaudevillians.

Now, in Dylan's return, illuminated by the slow flicker of thousands of matches, the old spirit seems to emerge anew. At each concert, the hush of anticipation, the buzz of uncertainty and the applause of recognition are extensions of young people again listening to his words and looking for their meaning. Arms linked together, swaying in unison, chanting in time to the

psychic current, a generation's anthem— learned in adolescence, sung in protest but not finally understood until periods of adult crisis—is being sung once more:

How does it feel, / How does it feel / To be on your own / With no direction home / Like a complete unknown / Like a rolling stone?

26 April 1975
Mary Travers Interview, Oakland, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 409-415.

Broadcast over KNX-FM Radio, Los Angeles in the program *Mary Travers and Friends* on April 26th 1975. Dylan's old friend, Mary Travers, of Peter, Paul and Mary fame persuades Bob to do his first radio interview since 1966. Heylin describes Dylan as not in a very talkative mood but I get the impression that Bob just can't get a word in edgeways (By the way – see if you can spot the yawn on the tape)

Taken from the circulating tape.

MT: Hi. This is Mary Travers and you're listening to Mary Travers And Friends and today's guest is Bob Dylan. We're here in the studio with Bob and there are a lot of good musical questions to talk about. First I'd like to, to talk a little bit about some of the folks that the two of us were listening to in the early '60's, people like Woody Guthrie and let's open, if we may, with a song you wrote about Woody Guthrie.

Song To Woody plays

MT: And now let's play the real Woody Guthrie. Shall we?

Ramblin' Down The Road from Guthrie plays

MT: What about Guthrie? Did you ever meet him?
BD: Yes I did. I met him.
MT: Was he very sick then?
BD: It was. Well, I didn't meet him in his, you know, in his prime time I guess, but, when I met him he was... he had that... he was pretty laid up with... he was still alive and alert, erm... I made many visits out to see him in the... at the hospital.
MT: Right, he had Huntington's Chorea, which is...
BD: Kind of a shaky thing, you know.
MT: This is Mary Travers now and I'll be right back after this message, with Bob Dylan.

MT: You've done an album that isn't released yet called the *Basement Tapes*. Want to tell me about that?
BD: That was recorded in '66, '67 up in Woodstock, you know, before Woodstock, before the big Woodstock Festival, before Woodstock was discovered, exploited, I don't know. We were just all up there sort of drying out.
MT: You and the Band?
BD: Yeah. The members of the Band and various other people, up there making music and planting gardens and just watching time go by. So in the meantime we made this record, made this – actually it wasn't a record, it was just songs which we'd come, you know, to, er, this basement and record; out in the woods. That's basically it really. Uh, the records have been exposed throughout the years so somebody mentioned it was a good idea to put it out, you know, as a record, so people could hear it in it's entirety and know just exactly what we were doing up there in those years and it'll be out shortly.
MT: Do you wanna play a track off of it?
BD: We can play all the tracks.
MT: OK. Let's play one track now and play some more later.

Lo And Behold plays.

MT: Do you think that that period was a good period, a good period to hang out and kinda relax and get back to what music was about for you?

BD: For me? What do you mean?

MT: In the sense that when you're on tour and you're working hard I know, I find, I mean, I write poetry, I don't write songs, er... I find it very difficult to write on the road, er, between getting on and off a plane and bad food and taking a holiday and it leaves you very... it saps you of the kind of contemplative time you need to sit around and really think and you also don't play so much together.

BD: Yeah, well these songs basically aren't a tape, they were written like in five, ten minutes, you know. We'd just come off a ferocious tour, you know, of Australia, Europe, England.

MT: These were more...

BD: Yeah. Needed some time, needed some time to er... let it all... you know, let the...

MT: The dust settle.

BD: Let the dust settle and the waves come in, you know.

MT: Well, I think a lot of people go through periods like that where they need, need to have... If you forget how to have fun with music you've just destroyed it for yourself and I think unfortunately that's what heavy touring often does to us all. You know, it becomes a job.

BD: It becomes a business.

MT: And perhaps that's the genesis of the *Basement Tapes*, is to go back and have fun with music. Let's play another track from that...

This is Mary Travers and we'll be right back after this message.

In a sense this is a kind of retrospective album for you and you've had some funny albums in the sense that... well, I take that back, not funny albums, but, most people do albums because the record company says you've got to do x number of albums a year and then when you get tired or I get tired, and it's happened to me too, you throw out a "Best Of..." and, er, kind of hang around and try figure out what it is you really want to say musically.

BD: Musically? Er...

MT: Are you thinking of planning an album?

BD: No, I just play, you know, I play and whatever comes out comes out. I don't plan albums, er, all that pressures off. I don't have to go in and make an album every six months, you know. I don't think of it that way. I just continue to play my guitar and, er, you know, if there's a song in my heart to do, I'll do.

MT: Let's maybe go back to Guthrie and see if we can't explore that a little bit more. He obviously had a great, you know, effect on your music and on a great many writers of that period and you can see his influence even now. I mean, the talking blues form, I think, is a very viable and will always be viable, form of saying something. And he wrote songs like *Pastures Of Plenty* and *This Land Is Your Land* – those songs most people know and many songs that are not as familiar, but he was also a very social writer and cared very much... and came from a time of, when many artists were very involved and caring about the country and what was happening to it and I suppose Peter, Paul and Mary and Pete Seeger and the Weavers and yourself even were caught up in that social commentary way of talking, of viewing the world as we saw it at that time. There were certainly a lot of your songs that were like that. Do you feel that that's not a position, a reasonable position to take now or is it just that you're caring about other things.

BD: No, it's a very reasonable position to take now. It's just that, you know, it's just hard to be specific about, you know, about what we're even talking about here let alone try to,

you know, write a song or do a play or make some kind of art form out of, er... these big situations which are happening in the world which are changing so fast now. From day to day, I mean, it's like, er, you know, they're just rolling over too fast to keep your finger on, you know, to keep your eye on or as, back then when Woody was doing all his writing, you know, things, the communication wasn't so, the media wasn't so powerful, erm...

MT: And it also took longer to get something changed.

BD: It took longer to get anywhere, you know. It took longer to get from here to there, you know, and...

MT: I guess what you're saying really is that presents a special kind of problem for people who wanna write that kind of material.

BD: Well, it can be confusing, you know, if you wanna write what you call topical songs, topical songs, hard to find the frontier.

MT: You wrote a lot of good topical songs, of course, er...

BD: Well, I wrote those songs before it was happening and, er, you know, before it's happening and you do it, it's before everybody's on your case, you know everybody gets on your case, you just don't wanna do it anymore. I mean, it's just like anything else – people tell you what to do – you don't wanna do what you're told to do. It's discouraging.

MT: Yeah, I noticed er, in...

BD: Plus you're just running over the same er... same ground.

MT: Yeah. I mean, you have said it. I don't think you have to say time's here are changing twice.

BD: Right. Say it again! Say it again! You know, that's what they want, you know.

MT: Yeah. What they want.

This is Mary Travers and I'll be right back after this message, with Bob Dylan.

MT: Did you ever meet Nina Simone?

BD: Uh? I met her at a table once somewhere in, er, in a club.

MT: She did a couple of your tunes.

BD: Yeah.

MT: And well, I thought.

BD: Yeah.

MT: I thought she booked something.

BD: Roberta Flack did *Just Like A Woman* but she got the words wrong.

MT: She changed the words.

BD: I don't think she changed them. I think she just got 'em wrong.

MT: I know Nina Simone did *Just Like A Woman* as well.

BD: Yeah.

MT: I think she makes a lyric change there.

BD: Yeah. Personally, I don't understand why anybody would want to do that song, except me.

MT: Ritchie Havens did it.

BD: Now Ritchie, it made sense coming from Ritchie.

MT: Let's play Ritchie.

BD: Yeah.

MT: I like Ritchie. When you say "I like Ritchie" that's not true – I love his work.

BD: That's an understatement, yeah.

MT: Yeah. I love his work. I love him as a human being. I love him as a musician.

BD: He's like a king.

Ritchie Havens music plays – *Just Like A Woman*.

MT: OK. Let's talk about the present since we can't talk about the future since it doesn't exist yet. In the future right now is...

BD: Oh, it all exists, you know, the present exists, the past exists and the future exists. It all exists.

MT: How do you see the future as existing?

BD: It exists as part of the present.

MT: In the sense that...

BD: It's connected. It just depends how far you wanna set your sights, you know. I think you could be very limited in, you know, Zen philosophy. I think it's Zen philosophy. I mean, you just live in the present, you know, but that's more complicated... that statement's more complicated than meets the eye really, meets the ear... but it's all the same, the past, the present and the future.

MT: Historically it would seem so.

BD: I think we might be crossing a line here that, er...

MT: OK. We'll drop that.

BD: I don't know if we're the right people to be talking about... maybe you should be talking about with somebody else, I should be talking about with somebody else and maybe neither one of us should be talking about it.

MT: OK. That's fine. Those questions are philosophic questions and the program really isn't about philosophy per se.

BD: Right.

MT: It's about music and although there's a lot of philosophy certainly in music, erm... and a lot in yours which is self-evident.

BD: The only philosophy in my music, I have to admit, is accidental, you know.

MT: You really think so?

BD: Yeah. None of it is pre-conceived, I can tell you that much.

MT: Well, when you say pre-conceived now I know when I write something, when I write a poem, I don't sit around all day saying "gee I'd like to write a poem about flowers", you know, whatever, or children or caring about people. I mean, I don't think about what it is I'm going to write about. I mean, when you feel like writing you sit down and out something pops. But it doesn't mean that you haven't been thinking about it. It means you haven't been consciously thinking about it.

BD: Well, yeah, well, that's thinking... that gets back to thinking again, you know. My stuff is... has to do more with feeling than thinking.

MT: OK.

BD: When I get to thinking I usually, er, you know, I'm usually in some kind of trouble and er...

MT: Well, feeling is often, if you can trust your own feelings, you're probably in better shape. Is it more truthful?

BD: Oh yeah. Well. Comes down to mutual trust.

MT: Yeah, always. On *Blood On The Tracks* er... I have to tell you that, needless to say, I loved the album, I really enjoyed the album, and felt that you... it was funny, because when we had talked before we talked about recording processes and how, that when they get very complex much of the truth of a piece of music is lost – it becomes something else.

BD: Hm, hm.

MT: And one of the things I enjoyed about *Blood On The Tracks*, as an album, was that it was very simple.

BD: Hm, hm. Well that's, you know, that's the way things are really, they are basically very simple. A lot of people tell me they enjoy that album. It's hard for me to relate to that. I mean, you know, people enjoying the type of pain, you know.

MT: It is a painful album.

BD: So, er...

MT: Well, perhaps maybe the word "enjoy" is the wrong word. Maybe a better word is to say that you're moved. I was moved by the album. You know, there were things that I could relate to in that album that grew as sense to me. You made sense to me on that album. I felt that it was a much more, well, for me, I felt it was much more "first person" as opposed to third person.

BD: Well, it makes it more clearly defined, but it still doesn't necessarily make it any better than, than, doing it, 'cause you can do it in second, third, fourth person too, you know, it's all the same, sure it is. Um. I know what you mean though.

MT: Yeah. Let's play *If You See Her Say Hello* 'cause I think that's a very beautiful song.

BD: Very pertinent.

If You See Her Say Hello plays

MT: For me that was a very poignant song.

BD: Hmhm.

MT: A very sad song. But, together, I mean, it wasn't, I think maybe what, one of the things I like about your work is either when you're feeling bad – it isn't self-pity bad – it's just "I don't feel good".

BD: Hm hm. Even when you're feeling down you feel up.

MT: Well, you're feeling something and that's the positive as opposed to feeling destroyed by it.

BD: Hm. Do you write songs?

MT: No! I'm writing a book. I write a lot of poetry. But somehow I've never figured out how to make poems into songs. It's just, er, it really seems to be a different way of writing.

BD: Yeah. It's confining.

MT: What, songs?

BD: Uhum.

MT: Well, yeah. But poetry seems to give you a bigger canvas to play with and you don't have to explain it, the same way. Songs seem to have to be understandable. Somehow in a poem you can ramble and deal with several thoughts and not have to necessarily connect them, the images. I know a song of yours that I think for me was most poem like, that was *Hard Rain's Gonna Fall*, 'cause it really wasn't a song, it was a series of images and when you see it on a piece of paper it really looked like a poem.

BD: Play Leon's version. He did it too.

Music plays.

MT: The *In Concert* album that you did with the Band on the last tour which was an incredible piece of business for someone who doesn't do a lot of concerts. You sure made up for it with that tour. I'd like to play something off of that album. Was there something that you thought went well.

BD: Oh, er... he played *All Along The Watchtower*.

Music plays.

MT: Let's finish off with a track from the *Basement Tapes*. Er, your choice.

BD: Er, OK. Oh, *Apple Suckling Tree*.

MT: OK. We'll finish with that.

BD: Yeah.

MT: And thank you.

Apple Suckling Tree plays.

Summer 1975
Answerphone Song

Source: *Circulating tape.*

Well, he ain't at home right now,
He can't come to the phone
So leave your name and number
When you hear that lonesome tone.

[harmonica solo]

I'd gladly talk to you right now,
I'd like to guarantee
But I can't speak or answer now,
Since I'm not really he.

September 1975
Dylan By Travers By Miles

Source: *the Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 417-419.

Despite my own personal feelings the Mary Travers interview was not perceived as a good session. For a contemporary critique there's no better article to refer to than one by Miles, published in *New Musical Express* on September 27th 1975.

DYLAN DOES HIS FIRST RADIO INTERVIEW IN EIGHT YEARS, AND STILL MANAGES TO SAY NOTHING

The news of a radio interview with Bob Dylan, who rarely does such, caused Dylanologists, fans and degenerates to take up their trannies recently and tune in to the deeply terrifying *Mary Travers and Friends Show*.

Folksie Mary, who has perfected the art of circumlocution so necessary for American talk shows, said she wanted to chat about those folks that she and Dylan had listened to in the early sixties. She played D's *Song For Woody* and Woody's *Ramblin' Down The Road* then finally turned to the Zimmerman (who had been sniffing noisily throughout her intro) and asked him in a motherly tone "What about Guthrie?"

But the Zimmerman didn't reply.

Quelle Horreur! The worst sin of all in American radio is to have dead air. Not even a sniff. In panic she waited as long as she dared before confronting him with a direct question that he just had to answer, the feeble little wimp, "Did you ever meet him?"

Real interesting stuff this. Dylan replied in a strangled sort of voice, **"Yes I did, I met him."** It was obvious by now that this wasn't going to be a program of intimate revelations swapped by old buddies of the early sixties. It was not the same Dylan who wrote **"Everybody that hung out at the 'Gaslight' was close, yuh had to be"** on the sleeve notes of Peter, Paul and Mary's *In The Wind* album back in 1963.

In fact she might as well have never met him before. But she struggled on, playing album tracks when Dylan answered question after question with **"um-hum"** but she did get him to talk about *The Basement Tapes*.

"That was recorded '66, '67 up in Woodstock. Before the big Woodstock Festival, before Woodstock was uh, (sniff) **discovered, exploited. I don't know, we were all up there sorta drying out... members of the Band and various other people. Up there making music and planting gardens and just watching time go by. So in the meantime we made this record. Actually it wasn't a record, it was just songs which we'd come to this basement and recorded. Out in the woods. That's basically it really. The records been exposed, um, throughout the years, so somebody mentioned it might be a good idea to put it out as a record so people could hear it in it's entirety and know just exactly what we were doing up there in those years... The songs on the tape, they were written like in five or ten minutes. We'd just come off a ferocious tour of Australia, Europe and England and needed some time to, uh, let it all out** (gulp) **like, let the..."**

Mary helped him out: "Let the dust settle?"

"...let the dust settle and the waves come in, you know."

Dylan doesn't like to be interrupted so he gulps loudly on a liquid and **"ah's"** through Mary's next question so she has to play another record when he **"Um-hums"** at the end of it.

She starts on the subject of topical songs and discovers as Jerry Leichtling said recently, **"It's a lot more difficult to talk to Dylan than to play with him."** Mary asked him diplomatically whether social comment songs were still a reasonable way of talking about the world. D was his usual evasive self:

"It's a reasonable position to take now, it's just that it's hard to be specific about what we're even talking about here, let alone to try to write a song or do a play or make some kind of art form out of these big situations which are happening in the world, which are changing so fast now, from day to day, you know. It's like they're just rolling over too fast to keep your fingers on, you know, keep your eye on. Whereas back then when Woody was doing all his writings, things, communications weren't so, the media wasn't so powerful. It took longer to get anywhere. It took longer to get from here to there."

And then came the old apologia as if Dave Van Ronk, Pete Seeger, Ramblin' Jack Elliott and all the others hadn't existed before Dylan arrived in New York City: **"I wrote those topical songs before it was happening, and before it's happening you can do it. Before everybody is on your case, you know. Everybody get on your case and you just don't want to do it anymore, you know. It's like anything else people tell you to do, you know. You don't want to do what you're told to do. It's, uh** (sniff) **discouraging."** (We understand, Bob).

"Roberta Flack did *Just Like A Woman* but she got the words wrong."

She changed them?

"I don't think she changed 'em. I think she just got 'em wrong."

Dylan is not greatly interested to hear that Nina Simone also did it with a lyric change. **"Yeah? Personally I don't understand why anybody would want to do that song, 'cept me."** But he agreed that it made sense when Ritchie Havens did it.

Mary spent a great deal of time telling Bobby how much she enjoyed *Blood On The Tracks* and finally said it was it's simplicity that she liked.

Dylan sighed, **"Um-hum, well that's it, you know. That's the way things really are. They are basically very simple. A lot of people tell me they enjoy that album. It's hard for me to relate to that. I mean, it** (sniff) **you know, people enjoying that type of pain, you know!"**

She felt that the album made sense to her because it was much more first person than third person. But you can't catch Bobby out with a line like that:

"Well, it makes it more clearly defined but it still doesn't necessarily make it any better than doing it... 'Cause you can do it second, third, fourth person too. You know it's all the same sure it is! Um, I know what you mean though."

Trouble is that Dylan doesn't like to be pinned down on anything: **"Any philosophy in my music, I have to admit, is accidental. None of it is preconceived, I can tell you that much."** So Weberman was lying all the time!

"My stuff has more to do with feeling than with thinking... When I get to thinking I'm usually in some kinda trouble."

10 October 1975
Jim Jerome Interview, Manhattan, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 183-186.

This appeared as a cover story in the November 10th issue of *People* magazine. It took place at Studio Instrument Rentals studio on 520W. 25th Street, New York during the Rolling Thunder Revue rehearsals.

BOB DYLAN:
A MYTH MATERIALIZES WITH A NEW PROTEST RECORD AND A NEW TOUR

Bob Dylan at 34: **"We each have our own vision and a voice inside that talks only to us. We have to be able to hear it."**

It was a windowless recording studio, six floors above a deserted Manhattan side street. The artists were sealed off, as if under a siege that would not end until the tape was finally right. Meal breaks were out-instead, carrots, crunchy cauliflower, curry sauce, Camembert, French bread, beer, wine and tequila were brought in. The mood otherwise, though, was of a warm, conspiratorial intimacy. The harsh overhead lights were replaced by soothing red and green spots. A homey floor lamp illuminated the music stand of the lead singer. The producer was supportive: "Just hold that tempo, Bobby," he encouraged from the control room. "That last take was startin' to smoke." The star leaned into his mike and responded: **"We're gonna get it, man, I know we are. Let's get this thing in the can and out on the streets."** Bobby was Dylan and, after his latest 18-month retreat, he was returning to the streets again.

The recording is *Hurricane*, a protest song with the gritty urgency and outrage that had once enflamed a whole American generation. It pleads against the controversial eight-year incarceration for murder of ex-boxer Rubin ("Hurricane") Carter. Simultaneously, Dylan was readying his first road show since his tumultuous comeback tour of 74. The itinerary would detour the megabuck impresarios, the multiseat superdomes, the computerized ticket networks and re-create the modest small-club mini-tours that characterized the years when he first left Hibbing, Minn. But his entourage includes friends like his ex-lady Joan Baez, plus Ronee Blakley, the discovery of the movie Nashville. Undeniably, Dylan creates in a genre in which minimal art is almost impossible, and so his latest comeback may live up to its ironic title – the Rolling Thunder Review.

Dylan is himself, after all, the most influential figure in American pop music (and thus pop culture) since 1960. His garbage was analyzed years before Henry Kissinger's. Every syllable or solecism of his life is subject to fearful scrutiny. Dylan, now 34 and as scruffy, wiry and taut as ever, looks back and sees it all as only a colossal accident. **"It was never my intention to become a big star. It happened, and there was nothing I could do about it. I tried to get rid of that burden for a long time. I eat and sleep and, you know, have the same problems anybody else does, and yet people look at me funny."**

If Dylan had his way, he would not be looked at at all. He has granted very few major interviews in eight years, and this was his first in some 18 months. **"I was playing music in the '50s"** he begins, **"and man, it was all I did. It saved my life. I'm not a hermit. Exclusive, maybe, but not reclusive."**

"I didn't consciously pursue the Bob Dylan myth," he continues. **"It was given to me by God. Inspiration is what we're looking for. You just have to be receptive to it."** While reports of Dylan's ardent Zionism are almost certainly exaggerated, he has unquestionably returned to his Jewish roots, or at least to a generalized spiritualism.

"I was locked into a certain generation," he says. **"I still am. A certain area, a certain place in the universe at a certain time".** The middle '60's, a period of drug-boosted frenzy, were reflected in Dylan's electric, clamorous rock n' roll and in his manic jet-stream imagery – and they culminated on the edge of death on a shattered motorcycle in the summer of 1966. Then followed a two-year withdrawal which only intensified the myth. **"I just wanted to be alone,"** he now says. He surfaced in 1968-69 with the subdued self-examination of *John Wesley Harding* and, later his watershed country LP, *Nashville Skyline*. Asked if he had it to do all over again, Dylan summons his samurai-quick sardonicism: **"Maybe I would have chosen not to have been born at all – bypass the whole thing."**

Dylan regards himself as an artist rather than a musician (**"Put my guitar playing next to Segovia's and I'm sure you could tell who was the musician"**), whose role is to create, not preach. **"I can move, and fake, know some of the tricks and it all applies artistically, not politically or philosophically."**

He has a way of leaving reviewers as well as disciples in the dust. **"I don't care what people expect of me,"** Dylan says defiantly. **"Doesn't concern me. I'm doin' God's work. That's all I know."** His classics like *Blowin' in the Wind* and *The Times, They Are A-Changin'* became anthems of the opposition, and the terrorist Weathermen took their name from his lyrics. But pressed about his influence, Dylan says only, **"You'll have to ask them, those people who are involved in that state of panic where my works seen to take them. It's not for me. I wouldn't have time for that. I'm not an activist. I am not politically inclined. I'm for people, people who are suffering. I don't have any pull in the government."**

The accusation that he copped out from the antiwar and other protest movements which his music catalyzed leaves him livid – especially criticism of his refusal to participate in Woodstock. **"I didn't want to be part of that thing,"** he says. **"I liked the town. I felt they exploited the shit out of that, goin' up there and gettin' 15 million people all in the same spot. That don't excite me. The flower generation – is that what it was? I wasn't into that at all. I just thought it was a lot of kids out and around wearing flowers in their hair takin' a lot of acid. I mean what can you think about that?"**

"Today the youth are living in a certain amount of fantasy," he adds. **"But in a lot of ways they become more disillusioned with life a lot earlier. It's a result of the overload, the mass overload which we are all gonna have to face. Don't forget when I started singin', marijuana was known only in certain circles – actors, musicians, dancers, poets, architects, people who were aware of what it could do for you. You never went down to make a phone call at a phone booth and had some cop hand you a joint. But now it's almost legal. The consciousness of the whole country has changed in a very short time."**

He is impatient with fans who expected his own expression to stay the same. **"Those people were stupid,"** he snaps. **"They want to see you in the same suit. Upheaval distorts their lives. They refuse to be loose and make themselves flexible to situations. They forget they might have a different girl friend every night, that their lives change too."** Certainly there were formative changes in Dylan's life: marriage in 1965 to fashion model Sarah Lowndes; the accident; the growth of his own family to five (including one child from Sarah's previous marriage).

Yet, professionally, Dylan points out, **"A songwriter tries to grasp a certain moment, write it down, sing it for that moment and then keep that experience within himself, so he can be able to sing the song years later. He'll change, and he won't want to do that song. He'll go on."** But Dylan is not speaking of himself. Of his own massive anthology of poems, he says, **"I can communicate all of my songs. I might not remember all the lyrics,"** he laughs, **"But there aren't any in there I can't identify with on some level."**

"I write fast," he continues. **"The inspiration doesn't last. Writing a song, it can drive you crazy. My head is so crammed full of things I tend to lose a lot of what I think are my best songs, and I don't carry around a tape recorder."**

"Music," Dylan says, **"is an outgrowth of family – and my family comes first."** He moved them to the beach at Malibu from Woodstock several years ago, and has been intermittently rumored to be splitting from Sarah. He concedes, **"I haven't been able to spend as much time with my wife as I would like to,"** but pinning Dylan down on personal matters is like collecting quicksilver. A sample colloquy:

Are you living with your wife?
BD: When I have to, when I need to. I'm living with my wife in the same world.
Do you...
BD: Do I know where she is most of the time? She doesn't have to answer to me.
So you don't live...
BD: She has to answer to herself.
Do you live under one roof?
BD: Right now things are changing in all our lives. We will always be together.
Where are you living now?
BD: I live in more than one place.
Can you be more specific?
BD: I don't want to give out my address.
Region?
BD: I live where I have to live, where my priorities are.
Right now, is that in New York City?
BD: Right now it is, and off and on since last spring.

"Traveling is in my blood," said Dylan, as he rehearsed for his latest tour. **"There is a lot of gypsy in me. What I'm trying to do is set my standards, get that organized now. There is a voice inside us all that talks only to us. We have to be able to hear that voice. I'm through listening to other people tell me how to live my life."** Did Bob Dylan, of all Americans, feel himself mortgaged to others? **"I'm just doing now what I feel is right for me,"** he concludes. **"For my own self."**

30 October 1975
Bob Dylan And Allen Ginsberg (From Barry Miles)

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, p. 421.

This exchange is to be found in Barry Miles' biography of Allen Ginsberg. It occurs the night of October 30, 1975, as the Rolling Thunder Review first lurched circus-like into being, after a concert and a few scenes filmed at Plymouth Rock.

AG: (To Dylan) Well, how do you like your party?

BD: It's your party, it's not mine.

AG: Well, is it giving you pleasure?

BD: Pleasure? Pleasure? No, not at all. I wouldn't want that, would you? That's too dangerous. I do what I do without thinking of pleasure.

AG: And when did you come to that state?

BD: Couple of years back. I mean, at one time I went out for a lot of pleasure, all I could get, because, see, there was a lot of pain before that. But I found that the more pleasure I got, subtly there was as much pain. And I began to notice a correspondence, the same frame. I began to experience and saw it was a balance. So now I do what I do without wanting pleasure. Or pain. Everything in moderation.

AG: Do you believe in God?

BD: God? You mean God? Yes, I do. I mean I know because where I am I get the contact with – it's a certain vibration – in the midst of – you know, I've been up the mountain, and – yes, I've been up the mountain and I had a choice. Should I come down? So I came down. God said, "Okay, you've been up on the mountain, now you go down. You're on your own, free. Check in later, but now you're on your own. Other business to do, so check back in sometime. Later."

11 September 1976
Neil Hickey Interview, Malibu, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 191-196.

An interview with Neil Hickey during August 1976 in the Malibu, California area. This appeared in the September 11, 1976 issue of TV Guide Magazine (the most widely circulated magazine in the U.S.) as a cover story to promote the broadcast of *Hard Rain*.

"My being a Gemini explains a lot, I think," Bob Dylan is saying. **"It forces me to extremes. I'm never really balanced in the middle. I go from one side to the other without staying in either place very long. I'm happy, sad, up, down, in, out, up in the sky and down in the depths of the earth. I can't tell you how Bob Dylan has lived his life. And it's far from over."**

Outside the auto's air-conditioned shell, the Malibu coastline of California, baking in 95-degree heat, is slipping past. Dylan observes the bathers idly. **"I'm not really very articulate. I save what I have to say for what I do."**

What Bob Dylan does is write songs and perform them. Over the last 15 years, since he was 20, he has created a body of work unique among American artists: songs of such power and pertinence that they stand as a definition of the country and the man in those years: songs of rage over inhumanity; songs of inexpressible love, bitter vindictiveness and ribald joy; songs of spiritual longing, confusion and affirmation; songs in such extraordinary numbers that it often seemed miraculous that a largely self-educated youth, son of a Jewish furniture dealer from the Mesabi iron range of northern Minnesota, could have created them all: *Blowin' In The Wind* (an anthem of the 1960's civil-rights movement), *Like A Rollin' Stone* (one of the greatest rock songs ever written), *Masters of War*, *With God on Our Side*, *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*, *Don't Think Twice, It's All Right*. He has been, in sum, the single biggest cultural influence on millions in his own generation. He has taken American music by the hand into uncharted regions.

Dylan turns from consideration of the bathers, smothers a grin, and says: **"Somebody called me the Ed Sullivan of rock and roll."** He laughs loudly at the thought. **"I don't know what that means,"** he says, **"but it sounds right."**

Indeed, Dylan is both master and star of his own troupe, the so-called Rolling Thunder Revue, a company of strolling players who recently completed a 50-concert tour, one performance of which was taped at Colorado State University and will be visible on NBC Tuesday night (Sept. 14): Bob Dylan's first TV special, *Hard Rain*.

Rarely interviewed (the last full-fledged one was seven years ago) and rarely seen publicly or privately over long periods, Dylan has chosen to be one of the least accessible figures in the entertainment world. Born in Duluth, Minn., he grew up in nearby Hibbing and migrated early to New York's Greenwich Village, where he acquired a recording contract and became a major concert star.

After a motorcycle accident in Woodstock, N.Y., in July 1966, in which he almost died (indeed, rumors of his death were persistent), he remained in virtual seclusion for several years. In late 1969 he appeared at the Isle of Wight Festival of Music, his first paid concert in four years, and 200,000 people from Great Britain, the European continent, Canada and the U. S. showed up to hear him. Since then, he has toured the U. S. several times and issued a series of highly successful albums.

"I don't really talk about what I do," Bob Dylan is saying. **"I just try to be poetically and musically straight. I think of myself as more than a musician, more than a poet. The real self is something other than that. Writing and performing is what I do in this life and in this country. But I could be happy being a blacksmith. I would still write and sing. I can't imagine not doing that. You do what you're geared for."**

This year, along the Presidential campaign trail, Jimmy Carter has been quoting Dylan in many of his stump speeches, and even in his acceptance speech at the Democratic convention. **"I don't know what to think about that. People have told me there was a man running for President and quoting me. I don't know if that's good or bad."** He laughs broadly. **"But he's just another guy running for President."**

"I sometimes dream of running the country and putting all my friends in office." He grins at the thought. **"That's the way it works now, anyway. I'd like to see Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and a few of those other guys come back. If they did, I'd go out and vote. They knew what was happening."**

Sports cars bearing upturned surfboards stream along Pacific Coast Highway in the noon sun. **"Over there,"** says Dylan, pointing to a roadside café rimmed with tables and benches. **"There's a place to stop."** Striding toward the café in a bent-kneed lope, Dylan – wearing jeans, sandals, a thin, frayed, black leather jacket and white burnoose swathing longish brown curls, resembles a hip shepherd from some Biblical *Brigadoon*. Settled with a beer, he fixes pale blue eyes on his companion and reflects on the press and its treatment of him. **"The press has always misrepresented me. They refuse to accept what I am and what I do."**

"They always sensationalize and blow things up. I let them write whatever they want as long as I don't have to talk to them. They can see me any time, doing what I do. It's best to keep your mouth shut and do your work. It makes me feel better to write one song than talk to a thousand journalists."

He rarely watches television, he says, including news. **"I'm not influenced by it. I don't feel that to live in this country you have to watch TV news."** How does he absorb the world's information before processing it into the topical songs that are so substantial a part of his work? **"You learn from talking to other people. You have to know how people feel, and you don't get that from television news."** In 1963, when Dylan was a skyrocketing young folk balladeer, Ed Sullivan invited him to appear on his show and Dylan accepted. He'd sing a new composition of his own called *Talkin' John Birch Society Blues*, Dylan told Sullivan, a satire on the right-wing political group. Sullivan liked the song and scheduled it, but CBS censors refused to let Dylan perform it. Dylan refused to alter his choice of material and angrily chose not to appear on the show. Since then, he has consistently declined offers of network television, except for two brief appearances: one on ABC's old *Johnny Cash Show*, out of friendship for Cash; another on a recent PBS tribute to Columbia Records executive John Hammond, who gave him his first recording contract.

What does he read? He laughs. **"You don't want to know that. It would sound stupid."** Still, the on-screen credits for this week's TV special carry "thanks" to (among others) Arthur Rimbaud, the French symbolist, mystical poet; and to American novelist Herman Melville.

"Yes. Rimbaud has been a big influence on me. When I'm on the road and want to read something that makes sense to me, I go to a bookstore and read his words. Melville is somebody I can identify with because of how he looked at life. I also like Joseph Conrad a lot, and I've loved what I've read of James Joyce. Allen Ginsberg is always a great inspiration."

Dylan visited Israel in 1971, an event that triggered talk among Dylan experts that Judaic tradition was about to become an overt aspect of his art. **"There was no great significance to that visit,"** he insists. But, he says: **"I'm interested in the fact that Jews are Semites, like Babylonians, Hittites, Arabs, Syrians, Ethiopians. But a Jew is different because a lot of people hate Jews. There's something going on here that's hard to explain."**

Many of Dylan's songs abound in religious mystical images: the album *John Wesley Harding* for example (**"the first biblical rock album,"** he calls it, and the first to be released after his motorcycle accident), contains songs based almost entirely on stories and symbols from the Bible.

"There's a mystic in all of us," he says. **"It's part of our nature. Some of us are shown more than others. Or maybe we're all shown the same things, but some make more use of it."**

How does Bob Dylan imagine God? He laughs abruptly, and then says, **"How come nobody ever asks Kris Kristofferson questions like that?"** After a pause, he says, **"I can see God in a daisy. I can see God at night in the wind and rain. I see creation just about everywhere. The highest form of song is prayer. King David's, Solomon's, the wailing of a coyote, the rumble of the earth. It must be wonderful to be God. There's so much going on out there that you can't get to it all. It would take longer than forever."**

"You're talking to somebody who doesn't comprehend the values most people operate under. Greed and lust I can understand, but I can't understand the values of definition and confinement. Definition destroys. Besides, there's nothing definite in this world."

He sips at his beer and asks solicitously, **"Want to go and sit on the beach for a while?"** We return to the car and, Dylan driving, roll slowly northward.

Dylan reminisces about Greenwich Village in the early 1960's and its role as the spawning ground for the great "folk boom" that swept the Nation in those years. One reason he had traveled there was to track down Woody Guthrie, the folk poet and balladeer who was Dylan's idol. The village's cafes and coffeehouses were home to scores of guitar-playing folkniks whose music was filtering out to the marketplace. The enormously popular Newport Folk Festivals, ABC's overslick TV series *Hootenanny* and hundreds of record albums by folk-style performers all fed the public's new appetite for simple, homemade music. (The folk boom ended, effectively, when the Beatles took the U. S. by storm in 1964, and when Dylan himself turned to the use of electrified instruments at about the same time.)

"There was a lot of space to be born in then," Dylan is saying. **"The media were onto other things. You could develop whatever creative interests you had without having to deal with categories and definitions. It lasted about three years. There's just as much going on now, but it's not centrally located like it was then."**

A few skeptics have suggested that Dylan wrote his so-called protest songs in the 1960's because his finely attuned commercial antennae told him there was a market for them. He denies it. **"I wrote them because that's what I was in the middle of. It swept me up. I felt *Blowin' in the Wind*. When Joan** [Baez] **and I sing it** [as they do on the TV special]**, it's like an old folk song to me. It never occurs to me that I'm the person who wrote that."**

"The bunch of us who came through that time probably have a better sense about today's music. A lot of people in the '70's don't know how all this music got here. They think Elton John appeared overnight. But the '50s' and '60's were a high-energy period."

And how did the Beatles fit into all this? Dylan wags his head earnestly. **"America should put up statues to the Beatles. They helped give this country's pride back to it. They used all the music we'd been listening to, everything from Little Richard to the Everly Brothers. A lot of barriers broke down, but we didn't see it at the time because it happened too fast."**

Dylan draws up at the curb, exits the car and walks to a 20-foot-high bluff over a near-vertical incline leading down to the beach. He scrambles down agilely and turns to catch cans of beer thrown after him. Settled in the sun, burnoose in place, peering out at the ocean, he resumes: **"I consider myself in the same spirit with the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. That music has meaning for me. And Joan Baez means more to me than 100 of these singers around today. She's more powerful. That's what we're looking for. That's what we respond to. She always had it and always will, power for the species, not just for a select group."**

What records does he play for his own amusement? **"Personally, I like sound-effects records,"** he says, laughing. **"Sometimes late at night, I get a mint julep and just sit there and listen to sound effects. I'm surprised more of them aren't on the charts."** He is still laughing. **"If I had my own label, that's what I'd record."**

A teen-age girl approaches Dylan, Frisbee in hand, and asks if it belongs to him. **"No,"** says Bob Dylan politely, and the girl nods and ambles off down the beach, obviously unaware that she has addressed (in the view of many) the generation's greatest rock-and-roll singer-writer. **"I pass on crowded streets without being recognized. I don't want to be one of those big stars who can't go nowhere. Change that to anywhere. My mother might read this."**

How is it, he is asked, that the Bob Dylan one encounters today, recumbent on this Malibu beach, seems so much more serene than the turbulent, often self-destructive, angry young man one recalls from the 1960's. (He's now the father of five, married to the former Sara Lowndes, living in the languor of Southern California rather than New York's bustle.) He squints toward the horizon. **"Anger is often directed at oneself. It all depends on where you are in place and time. A person's body chemistry changes every seven years. No one on earth is the same now as he was seven years ago, or will be seven years from today. It doesn't take a whole lot of brains to know that if you don't grow you die. You have to burst out; you have to find the sunlight."**

Where is he, musically, these days? **"I play rag rock. It's a special brand of music that I play. I'll be writing some new songs soon, and then, look out! The music will be up to a whole new level."** Does he write every day, and does it come easily? **"Are you kidding? Almost anything else is easy except writing songs. The hardest part is when the inspiration dies along the way. Then you spend all your time trying to recapture it. I don't write every day. I'd like to but I can't. You're talking to a total misfit. Gershwin, Bacharach, those people, they've got song-writing down. I don't really care if I write."** Pause. **"I can say that now, but as soon as the light changes, it'll be the thing I care about most. When I'm through performing, I'll still be writing, probably for other people."**

Any regrets? **"The past doesn't exist. For me there's the next song, the next poem, the next performance."** Any messages to the world? **"I've been thinking about that. I'd like to extend my gratitude to my mother. I'd like to say hello to her if she's reading this."** Ever see her? Pause. **"Not as much as when I was a kid."**

He plucks his beer can from the sand. **"I hope there's not a snake in my beer,"** he says, apropos of not very much. Then he reclines languorously and watches the sun descend slowly to the Pacific horizon.

September-November 1977
Allen Ginsberg Interview, Malibu, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 843-857.

This interview was first published in issue 33 of the *Telegraph* (Summer 1989). Because of the special nature of its' "release", John Bauldie's introduction to the *Telegraph* article should be quoted;

> "When Allen Ginsberg, on his way home from Hawaii, called in to see Bob Dylan in California in September 1977, he found him hard at work putting the finishing touches to the editing of *Renaldo & Clara*. Intrigued and delighted by what Dylan was doing, Ginsberg promptly resolved to write a critical appreciation of the film. He asked for Dylan's co-operation, watched the film several times and then conducted a lengthy interview with him, in which the films aims, objectives and symbolism were discussed. However, at the interviews conclusion Dylan told Ginsberg that he thought he had "revealed too much" and demanded that Allen gave him the tape back. Then, between 27 October and 1 November, Ginsberg again tackled Dylan about the film. At the same time, Dylan was also interviewed by an otherwise unidentified figure named Pierre Cotrell. I have edited what follows from transcripts of those interviews. The Pierre Cotrell interview, the purpose of which is uncertain, took place in two parts on October 30. Later, in his preliminary editing work, Ginsberg mixed the Cotrell papers with his own and it is not always easy to identify the questioner. In generously giving permission for the interviews to be printed at last, Allen Ginsberg wishes it to be noted that he has had no hand in the preparation of the material for publication. Thanks are due to Allen for his generous agreement to this project, and to the equally magnanimous Miles, without whom the material might not have been preserved and who offered the papers to *The Telegraph* in the first place".
>
> — John Bauldie.

Note: Howard Alk (HA) and Louis Kemp (LK) chip in here and there.

BOB DYLAN INTERVIEWED BY ALLEN GINSBERG (and Pierre Cotrell)

AG: What attracts you, as a poet to movies? What do you look for?

BD: To shift my consciousness somewhere – hopefully to a place that applies to my own personal experiences. I want to be entertained. If I see a movie that really moves me around I'm totally astounded, I'm wiped out. If film was around when da Vinci was operating, he'd have made film... I consider myself like da Vinci. Film is an art medium nowadays, but art didn't become Art till the 9th century; it existed 3,000 years before it was "Art". Before the 19th century people painted what they were paid to paint They weren't painting anything individual. Look at Bosch – there's no struggle. There's no struggle in any of Dali's paintings. Life is a struggle. If you want to do business and create work, then you struggle; if your struggle shows, then you make it. It's all about hard work, ploughsharing. Even van Gogh used what was there – he never painted what he would have liked to paint. He painted what was there to paint. We try to make something better out of what is real. If we want to be successful as an artist, we make it better, and give meaning to something meaningless.

AG: What's your idea of "Better" – your direction of "Better"?

BD: You can make something lasting. You wanna stop time, that's what you wanna do. You want to live forever, right Allen? Huh? In order to live forever you have to stop time. In

order to stop time you have to exist in the moment, so strong as to stop time and prove your point. So that you have stopped time. And if you succeed in doing that, everyone who comes into contact with what you've done – whatever it might be, whether you've carved a statue or painted a painting – will catch some of that; they'll recognise that you have stopped time. That's a heroic feat! We have literally stopped time in this movie. Um hum. Regardless of what it's about – Renaldo and Clara, a guy selling a horse, a guy singing on a stage or fighting with a man, whatever it is -we have stopped time in this movie. We've grasped that time. And we are the only ones. I've never seen a film except one other that has stopped time.

AG: What film is that?

BD: *Children Of Paradise*.

AG: Yes, I thought that, sure!

BD: And this movie stops time in a way that no American movie ever has and I don't think will. What we've done is hold on to something which seemed to be escapable, and we captured it and made it real. You notice how everybody watches that movie and says, "Jesus, it just seems like yesterday; it seems like this happened just the other day."

AG: Do you want to be immortal? And why?

BD: I'd like my work to survive, yeah. Do you remember what Henry Miller wrote on that? "*An artist inoculates the world with his disillusionment.*" It's not good enough to be an observer all the time. You have to know that you've stopped time. You think about nothing. You're totally absorbed in what you're doing. Any singer can do that. Some fake it. When it resolves itself, it's never resolved – you have to resolve it. To resolve is nothing more than letting go. Do you think Rembrandt ever finished a painting? I mention him 'cause he seems to be a perfectionist – I'm saying he let go. He has got many layers underneath. Rembrandt made mistakes too. Look how long it took to build the pyramid... When you wrote Kaddish, you had to let go.

HA: The poet has classically spoken in the First Person.

BD: I use I and me and you. It's personal. All the great movies stop time for you. You're standing in awe in front of the painting the painter has achieved. Through the art lies immortality. That makes him high, gives him everything he needs, just knowing he can do that. How many people can say that, that they've lived their life? The artist couldn't care less about who sees it. You see it, you know it, yeah. It falls off on the observer. I don't think you're a conscious artist, Allen. I don't think you know what you're doing. Anybody can be an unconscious artist. (Dylan notices the tape-recorder). **Allen's got everything down!**

LK: He thinks he's gonna keep the tape?

AG: What do you mean I'm not a conscious artist? Are you a conscious artist?

BD: Yes. Because I had a teacher that was a conscious artist and he drilled it into me to be a conscious artist, so I became a conscious artist.

AG: A painting teacher?

BD: Yeah.

AG: And what does a conscious artist practise?

BD: Actuality. You can't improve on Actuality. Let's say that this is what God gives you -he gives you a flower. (Dylan offers a flower). **Let's see you improve it.** (Ginsberg, confused, tries flower arrangement. Dylan says he means "improve" it by photographing it or singing it).

AG: What is *Renaldo & Clara*?

BD: Reality and Actuality transcending itself to the final degree of being more than the Actuality. Renaldo is the Actuality, and what the film is is transcending Renaldo to a higher Actuality and Clarity. Renaldo is everybody. Don't you identify with Renaldo? Renaldo is you, struggling within yourself, with the knowledge that you're locked within the chains of your own being. Actuality is what is.

AG: What is clarity?

BD: Anything that's clear.
AG: What's Renaldo's basic situation?
BD: He maintains, lying on his back. He's Everyman in the movie, and he survives. He is a man contemplating the future. His situation is he's pulling away from his past, but how does he get away from a past that doesn't exist? One of his characteristics is that he goes everywhere. At the opening of the movie he's in a mask you can see through – it's translucent. At the end, he's seen putting on face paint. Renaldo is a figure of duality. The Mexican man who traded the horse was the other side of Renaldo's duality. The man who puts the white paint on his face obviously becomes the Chorus of the movie. He has no name... The man on the floor at the end is the Dreamer. That's neither Renaldo nor the chorus nor the man on the stage – the stage is part of the Dream. A man who's walking around seeming to be alive has dreamt nothing. But the man on the floor, who's obviously dreaming, no one asks him anything – but the whole movie was his dream.
AG: What's the significance of the scene where the college kid, when asked, says he had no dream last night?;
BD: This whole movie is the dream that the college kid did not have. This whole movie has gone down and they haven't dreamt any of it. The movie that you never dreamt, that you wish you'da dreamt.
HA: The movie you haven't dreamt yet.
AG: Does Renaldo have a soul or is he a succession of disparate illusorily connected images, I like ordinary mind?
BD: At the beginning he's locked in, he's wearing a mask you can see through, he's not dreaming. Most likely he will become what he is dreaming about. Renaldo's dream almost killed him.
AG: It's at the end of the movie, when he's putting make-up on – "What you can dream about can happen".
BD: Exactly! You got it! Renaldo has faith in himself and his ability to dream, but the dream is sometimes so powerful it has the ability to wipe him out. Renaldo has no ordinary mind – he might not even have a soul. He may in actuality be Time itself, in his wildest moments
AG: What about Clara?
BD: Clara is the symbol of Freedom in this movie. She's what attracts Renaldo at the present. Renaldo lives in a tomb, his only way out is to dream. Renaldo first appears in a mask, then he's told in the cafe, "That's the way it is." Lenny Bruce said, "There isn't anything that should be, or what's supposed to be, there's only what is." All there is, is what is – we're not used to that in modern times. If you want to summarise the film, this is the way it is: "There are heroes in the seaweed".
AG: What holds Renaldo in this inescapable tomb?
BD: Compulsion. You know at the end of the movie he's about to or has broken out of that tomb... you feel that even though he may be under strenuous times, he might transcend them. Renaldo has no regard for man, woman or circumstance; it is only his dream which keeps him going.
AG: What compels Renaldo to Clara?
BD: Her abandonment. He's attracted to her freedom. I don't know if I should say superficial freedom. The entire world is in chains according to Clara – bondage to themselves, slaves to their ego. She helps Lafkesio get out of prison. Everyone is Lafkesio to her. Renaldo to her is the only person in the entire world who isn't Lafkesio – that's what attracts her to him.
AG: Why is Renaldo dreaming up all this confusion and disturbance and activity and music and masquerade?
BD: He's trying to break out of himself – not only that, he's trying to break out of himself by means of reason. He's not a logical minded person, but he does believe in the reason of

his own soul and the ability of his own soul to reason, and that's why the masquerade is continuing... He's also trying to recognise his soul.

AG: What if there is no soul?

BD: (Dylan smiles) **Then the whole journey has been in vain.**

AG: What if it is in vain! What if that's the liberation?

BD: Then the journey that we're all on has been invalid... He's actually in the process of conquering his own soul.

AG: That could be interpreted variously.

BD: What can't be.

AG: Why end the movie with the black singer singing *The Morning Of Your Life*?

BD: Because it's in fact the morning of Renaldo's life. He has ceased to be Renaldo. From that moment on he will become what he wishes to become. No more will he answer to Renaldo. Renaldo wants to be free from his unforgettable past – in other words, he wants to forget his unforgettable past and something earthshaking must have happened to him.

AG: Is that earthshaking event in the film?

BD: It's represented by the whole series of events in the film.

AG: Who does Renaldo think he is?

BD: He thinks he's anybody but Renaldo. What time does he have to think? He dreams. He doesn't think. Thinking would make him a logical man. He's not thinking, he's only acting and dreaming.

AG: What comments does he make on himself in the film?

BD: He doesn't make any obvious comments. I haven't heard him make any. You don't see him as a man of obvious personality or characteristics, you see him as a man either driving or being driven – either you're hounding or being hounded. Do you remember him getting off the bus and running with the woman screaming in his head? He witnessed a lot.

AG: Did you make this movie as a representation of yourself, psychologically?

BD: Yes. Is this too intellectual?

AG: No. Mature men talk about their experiences. So these characters are all dream projections of Renaldo – all aspects of the mandala of his own ego?

BD: Yes. Exactly.

AG: Why does Renaldo think about himself so much?

BD: We don't even know if he's thinking. Renaldo doesn't even think at all. That's his aura. Renaldo might not even think. It may be that's what they're projecting on him.

AG: Everybody wants a piece of Renaldo, seeking his heart. Does he encourage it? Does he recognise and work with his creation consciously, with the characters, this appeal to their hearts and vice versa? is everyone trying to be his companion so he won't be alone or so they won't be alone?

BD: He anticipates it. They really don't care too much about Renaldo – whether he's alone or not – they're only thinking about themselves, which is exactly why Renaldo's heart is breaking. See, the thing is Renaldo comes closer to himself towards the end of the film – and there he is with Bob Dylan's wife, sitting on the train near the end of the film.

AG: What does that mean – that he's just going out with girls or something?

BD: Well, you've got to take into account the look on people's faces.

AG: What about the Woman in White?

BD: It's the ghost of Death – Death's ghost. Renaldo rids himself of death when she leaves, and he goes on, alive, with his greasepaint. He's becoming the hero of his own dream. The Woman in White, the Joan Baez persona, exists only in Renaldo's imagination in this movie. The Woman in White first appears at the end of the first half, after Renaldo restates his point that "*It ain't me, it ain't me babe*." That's when the god forces bring in the big cannon – The Supreme Ego, White Death – and try to make him fixate on that.

AG: When does she have the rose?

BD: Immediately. She's carrying her cunt in her hand.

AG: Her first words...

BD: You hear resonating in her head. *"Once you start lying to yourself, you become an enemy to yourself."* The issue at hand is lying to oneself- not just false advertising. Her first line is *"Is Renaldo there?"* She's come for Renaldo – he's in her mind's eye. She's traveling towards him. She won't leave when he's making it with Clara. She always seems to go, but she never goes. She must leave three or four times, but she's always back. You see her standing there.

AG: How can he get rid of her?

BD: Through transfiguration. She finally leaves, if you see the film, notice all that finally happens to her. For instance, this woman is the ghost of Clara's former self. She is this same woman who was traded for a horse. Now during that time Joan Baez and Dylan – the man in white paint and the past that's non-existable – sing a song, *Never Let Me Go*; and when they're looking at the newspaper, their minds are headed to the same point. Renaldo's closer then to being face to face with what he knows and loves and being able to discard it. Our ego becomes so strong sometimes that we believe it and begin to listen to it. The ego does cling to the past.

AG: Does every word in the movie count?

BD: Sometimes yes, sometimes no. There are many other elements in the movie, beyond the character of Renaldo. It's the movie of Renaldo, but there's so much action passing through his experience – like the figure of the Masked Tortilla, a guy of Heroic proportions capable of Heroic deeds: like in the nightclub where he's taking the stand for this man who can't articulate. It's an example of something he can do -a Heroic nature, a modern day Robin Hood. On the other hand, he's capable of great compassion and great self-pity – haunted by it but brave enough to break out of it. He's also a dreamer. The man who's singing in whiteface, he's a dreamer, and that is his sidekick, confidant, and he's also a dreamer. But his dream is not as big or tangled as Renaldo's. Basically, his dream is black and white, good and bad -opposites like that. Nothing is happening in the movie except one scene – the singer at the end, who's been singing since the beginning of the movie, is in another room, another time, another era, but in the same breath. It's his songs which are special, it isn't him.

AG: Isn't Renaldo like everyone, alone, flat on his back? Is this the Show of Alone? Is it a moment of Rest?

BD: It's the moment where Renaldo's beginning to understand himself and what's been happening to him. By the time he understands himself, the Woman in White has vanished completely – she no longer exists in his dream or in his reality. Now for further information you have to check the movie.

AG: The Woman in white represents Death exonerated? The Duality of... a stagnation?

BD: Renaldo's obsessed with his own freedom. Clara represents that obsession. Clara's coming out of church with a rope, to get somebody out of prison. To her, the whole world is in chains; everyone is in bondage. She herself is an example of supposedly attainable freedom, but is she really free? She's the one that's gonna stay in that room. Clara's becoming an enemy to herself. You notice she's gonna stay in that room. Renaldo, applying white greasepaint, is going to get out. Clara has no dream.

AG: How can he leave her if she symbolises freedom?

BD: She's a part of his past. In order for him to survive he must leave her behind.

AG: Is Clara free of her ego?

BD: Clara's free, but she can change – she says. We know she can change because we've seen her in different ideas of herself. Renaldo, you only see him dreaming. The man onstage clarifies Renaldo to himself. Maurice, the French Canadian, is a parallel real-life figure of an everyday man who's biding his time. He gives Renaldo a shoulder to cry on. Clara is summed up by the words of the poet as she's coming out of the church – the sorrows of the world are reflected in her eye: *"With your eyes of no money/with your*

***eyes of false China/with your eyes of Czechoslovakia/attacked by robots"*. Everyone in the movie happens to be a poet: Blue was talking about poets; the poet Father is Clara's father; Christ himself- the idea of Christ – might be Clara's brother; Clara might be Christ's sister. How many girls are mistaken for their mother? It's a common occurrence.**

PC: How do you relate to Jesus?

BD: He's in the film, especially in reference to the myth of the complete man which exists inside of Renaldo's head. Renaldo's attempting to become a Complete man, to step aside of himself.

PC: Is Renaldo the brother of Christ?

BD: No, he's no relation to Christ, he only dreams of Christ. Christ is a mythological figure on which the movie hangs. There are many figures in this movie, but they go by so fast.

PC: There's the Father...

BD: The Father, the Idea of the Father, the Voice of the Father, the Necessity of the Father. The girlfriend's talking with Dylan – says her Father won't let her go off with him; her brother is played by David Mansfield, her son, the angelic boy, a musician, a parody of Christ, the Innocent Lamb. He might be Clara's brother.

PC: Parents and children never agree: does this Father agree with his son?

BD: There's no conflict. The Father cares very deeply for the Son, obviously. He wants to enlighten him into new experience, in the Bordello – the Diamond Hell.

AG: Diamond Hell?

BD: It's not a Bordello. They are part of the past which don't exist. We're all involved in our past, which didn't exist. My past doesn't exist any more than anyone else's. Why should I be different? Why should I have a past when nobody else has? The girls sitting in that room are a reflection of Nothing and Nobody. They're locked into Diamond Hell and are not giving pleasure to no-one.

PC: What's the relation of the Father to Renaldo?

BD: He's taught Renaldo what he needs to do to be a poet, but indirectly. Renaldo, of course, breaks away from the Father – he has no patience with the Father, although he respects him. The Father is actually a figure of indecision. The key line of the movie is "What comes is gone for ever every time."

PC: There are lots of ideas of death presented through the movie. Mexican Death – "*We may not make it through the night*", Kaddish, Kerouac's grave, the discussion about graves visited...

BD: The idea of death in the movie is really the idea of life, like in a photographic negative.

AG: Did the characters in the film pre-exist its making, or did Renaldo and Clara emerge during shooting or editing?

BD: No, no, they were there before the movie even began, otherwise there wouldn't have been a movie, they were there from the beginning.

AG: Why did Renaldo never really face the camera?

BD: You mean why are you seeing only certain sides of Renaldo? That's all he allows you to see. That's natural. He looks right at you through the mirror in the final scene. You see more dimension and depth in Renaldo than you do in most films you see. I think this film might be too simple in it's complexity.

HA: It's that you're pursuing, not that he's hiding. He becomes more accessible to you physically. He's masked at first, but the whiteface becomes more and more worn away as the film goes on.

BD: Renaldo's caught in a period of alienation from himself – caught up in the mess of not being able to compete with his other self, the man he is working to become in order to survive the hellhole he's found himself in. The man in whiteface is what Renaldo cannot become at the moment. At the Indian party that isn't Renaldo, that is the man in whiteface. He represents the compelling figure of authority which Renaldo is trying to become. Renaldo is trying to transcend himself, through the past and the present. He's

trying to make it into the future, but he can't do that unless he leaves the unimaginable past behind.

AG: The Indians...

BD: That's all part of Renaldo's dream – all part of his experience. The Indian child, who's actually a medicine man, represents the Chief of Practical Purpose, the Chief of practically everything practical, the Chief of Practical Matters.

AG: Tell me about some of the other figures in the movie.

BD: The one pure figure in the movie is the girlfriend. One, she explains that she needs her fathers approval to go off with Dylan; two, she offers refuge to Renaldo; three, she tells the musician that there are no gigs left. As the film makes obvious, no one pays any attention to her; no one's going to let her stand in the way. She has all these basic principles of life – she's the figure of real Truth in the movie. She changes, in the movie, from Innocence to Beauty. She's talking to Renaldo – "Stand and bear yourself like the Cross and I'll receive you". She's actually the one person in the movie thinking more of Renaldo than of herself. She's never got a rose. Her cunt's never displayed.

AG: You've been talking about the rose.

BD: In the symbol of the rose we see the vagina traveling around. You see it a lot. You could trace it every time it comes up. Go to the movie and pick up all the signs where the rose goes. First on the table in front of the truck driver, who's almost contemplating it; then Clara in one of her former selves – a manifestation of her as desperation – picks up the rose and then travels with it. It was nobody's rose. Clara picked it up and went off alone to the train station, where she sees and lures Renaldo for the first time. We can also refer to the rose as "the dark opening". Scarlet constantly represents the vagina, the rose, the sweetness of it – always at the elusive Renaldo's right hand, that close. The man in the white face, the reasonable Renaldo, can always reach out to grab it.

AG: Hurricane has a role...

BD: He represents the Certainty of common sense. He's common sense being ostracised. There's something special about him – he's obviously a philosopher, a philosopher in chains, isn't he? We have this song Hurricane and we have this man. It comes back to the idea of getting out of prison. Clara will do what Renaldo will only dream about – get a man out of jail. Renaldo may be thinking about it, singing about it, but Clara does it, directly, in present time.

AG: The Old Woman?

BD: She's a gypsy, some kind of healer. An Influence – the Guilt Influence, the Influence of Institution, Marriage, Money, the concept of Money – it doesn't sneak through her fingers – she's a false prophet. She doesn't obviously heal the Father, but she makes the pretence of being a healer. She's very materialistic. She's got the rose wrapped up in her head, as does Scarlet. The movie deals with the transfiguration of the rose, if you can catch that going by.

AG: What quality do you see in David Blue?

BD: You know in the old Greek plays, the Chorus? David seems to know what's going on, but he's only existing in Renaldo's dream. He's the narrator who links the movie to generational history. I think, though I could be wrong, he's a figment of Renaldo's imagination that attempts to reconcile the past that never was. David Blue has no past. He represents neither past nor future. There'd be no David Blue if Renaldo didn't exist. There's the dream element. The movie is Renaldo's dream. The chorus is the reality of this movie. Take the chorus out of the movie and you'd have no movie. In the diner, the man who says if you lie to yourself you do bad time, this man lives on experience alone. That's what teaches him. He's a man who learns from experience.

AG: The Reporter?

BD: He doesn't play any role. He can't get out of the present at all; he can't get to the past or the future. He's locked in the present. He's one of the few people in the movie that survives in the present. The Girlfriend is the only other one.

AG: Bob Dylan?

BD: You don't know much about Bob Dylan, only one aspect of his personality, for obvious, almost comical reasons. His name is mentioned, he's part of the Rolling Thunder Revue – there's a disc jockey who told you: "Dylan, Baez, Neuwirth, Elliott". Bob Dylan is being used here as a famous name, so we don't have to hire Marlon Brando! But in this case we have the proof. Now he's very obviously a cowboy in a straw hat – someone else is playing Bob Dylan, with a slightly persuasive personality. His aim is to get what he deserves. He makes his intentions very clear. He's not trying to hide anything. You can hear the obvious sincerity in his voice -and also a desperate need to communicate.

AG: A belly dancer was belly dancing in the room Bob Dylan wanted to get into, and Ronson wouldn't let him pass. Why? Did he want to get into that room to watch, or to belly dance?

BD: Maybe he was going to make a connection with one of those ladies, or meet someone there at 10 o'clock. Bob Dylan exists in Renaldo's dream. Lafkesio, he's the one that doesn't. He trades his horse, unknowingly, for a woman who's at that moment existing inside a song that the singer in whiteface is singing. The man onstage happens to be Ramon, who's assaulted with a razor by Mrs Bob Dylan, who's been having an affair with another man. One man is accosting a woman who's having an affair, and her husband hasn't slept with her for three years, but he still knows who she's sleeping with. "Then I see the bloody face of Ramon." We don't even know who does Ramon in – Mrs Bob Dylan or Mr Bob Dylan. I suspect it was Mrs, but I'm speaking for the film buff here. In the context of the movie it doesn't matter. After all, if he hasn't slept with her in three years, the heck with him!

AG: So who's Ramon?

BD: Ramon actually is the memory of the dead lover, the memory of a bygone lover. Rightly or wrongly, he accuses her of taking on lovers.

AG: "*The bloody face of Ramon*"?

BD: The image of the dead lover. Ramon's on the stage quite a time. You see him in the mirror. He's the Hanged Man – someone who's suspended.

AG: Why does she run on him all of a sudden, when he says "I know who you've been flicking"?

BD: Why? Because he doesn't really give a shit. Mrs Dylan's song in the movie is need, need, need – that's all she does. She sings a song called *New Sun Rising*. She needs a new sun rising every morning and a new moon every night. She just needs a lot of that stuff.

AG: The character played by Helena Kallianiotes?

BD: Helena represents something – a true figure of mystery or purity? You never know. She really is the unattainable of the world, on the material plane – both attainable and unattainable. She never has a rose, never needs one. She's not gonna take no for an answer. She works in negatives. She doesn't want to be denied. She wants never to get where she's going. She's the lost companion, the companion you never see again.

AG: There are various other minor characters.

BD: Ungatz appears four times. He appear in the motorcycle shot on the street He seemingly doesn't know what's going on. He's a man who can be trusted with anything and it'll be safe. You won't be able to get a word out of him and any word you do get out of him you won't be able to comprehend anyway. So he will give you the time of day and that's all – as Renaldo does. He's a minor character. This is a textbook guide for when you're watching the film.

AG: What about Rodeo?

BD: He's an important character. He appears three times. He's perplexed. He exists in a vacuum. He has a preconceived idea of himself – a young man of tomorrow.

AG: Who's Jack Elliott?

BD: Longheno de Castro. He's with Renaldo at one time – with that man we can assume is Renaldo – driving a van. He used to be married. He had some kind of scene, he had his

moment of blisshood somewhere down the line, and now what he's doing is hard to say – he's kinda locked up in time and space. It's hard to tell what kind of effect it's had on him, but he's looking for answers – looking for the answer that he's already had. He's a continual searcher, a rambler, a bit of a demagogue. He appears at the short scene at the end of the drive, with the woman behind the counter. He says, "I just got married". He's the man who announces to Lafkesio that he's traded his horse for a woman. He can't understand that, obviously – can't understand a man who trades a horse for a woman. The woman's a replica of Longheno de Castro's woman in marriage.

AG: Who's Bob Dylan?

BD: Nobody's Bob Dylan. Bobby Dylan's long gone. He's looking into the film editing viewer, asking "Who's this man? Who's that?"

AG: Bob Dylan had been long gone before you started the movie?

BD: Yes. Let's say that in real life Bob Dylan fixes his name on the public. He can retrieve that name at will. Anything else the public makes of it is it's business.

PC: Who are you in the movie?

BD: Me? Sitting here? I'm not in the movie. I was in the movie when you saw the movie - obviously I play Renaldo. I was Renaldo in the movie. Sometimes I just appeared on the set and happened to be Renaldo. You're concerned with Bob Dylan.

PC: But everybody will be concerned.

BD: I'm not concerned about everybody. Neither is Bob Dylan. Bobby Dylan made a movie. When you go to a movie, do you ask what does that person do in real life?

PC: Why did you need to make the movie?

BD: I don't know. If someone does something, you can't ask him why he did it. I like to go to the beach too. I can fix a flat. I think it's amazing somebody can go out and make a film that's never been made before. I've never made one before... not a big one,

PC: In *Renaldo & Clara* the relationship between Dream and Myth is so clouded that we confuse them.

BD: That's very true! I couldn't say it better. The disc jockey said, *"If somebody told you Bob Dylan was coming to town, you probably wouldn't believe it."* You notice that? *"If somebody told you the truth, you probably wouldn't believe it."* But the film is no puzzle, it's A-B-C-D, but the composition's like a game – the red flower, the hat, the red and blue themes. The interest is not in the literal plot but in the associational texture – colors, images, sounds.

AG: Pound's Cantos are constructed in this way – image to image.

BD: Every great work of art is when you think about it. Shakespeare. The point to get is that the film is connected by an untouchable connective link. I'm as good as anybody to tell you about it for starters. There are some things happening in this film which are literal. There are words for what this movie does, and then again there are no words. I was interested in reading Rona Barrett in the paper: "This movie will do for movies what his music has done to influence American music".

HA: The grammar of movies is broken open. Now you can make your own grammar.

BD: Individual filmmakers are hard to find these days. What filmmaker watches what other filmmakers make? Howard and I were on to this idea 12 years ago, so it's not like something which just happened yesterday – not just something we did in the basement the last two years.

HA: There are moments of classical musical comedy – some people are going to be crying, some laughing, some will shut up when the movie's shown.

BD: A crowded theatre's going to be dangerous. There's a moment in *Just Like A Woman* that's as close to Mr and Mrs Bob Dylan as the movie gets. The meaning of the film is the shedding of the skin, just like a snake. If a snake doesn't shed his skin, he's through – he decays. To survive, he must. The film doesn't have anything to do with decay; there's nothing decaying in this film. Basically, this film was made because the makers of it wanted to see it as a film, as an experience. I'll tell you what we artists do; we try to

create what we must create, because it isn't there. When have you seen *Renaldo & Clara* before? If it had been done before, we wouldn't have had to do it.

AG: You chose to do it as improvisation...

BD: How else? Life itself is improvised. We don't live life as a scripted thing. Two boxers go into the ring and they improvise. You go make love with someone and you improvise. Go to sports car races, total improvisation. It's obvious everyone was acting in that movie for dear life. Nobody was thinking of time. People were told this, this, this – the rest of it is up to you, what you say in this scene is your business, but at the same time beyond that, the only directions you have are: you're trying to die in a year, or see your mother for the first time in 20 years. So far as instructions to actors go, less is more. And I made it clear to the cameraman, Paul, that it wasn't a documentary, and I told him not to shoot it like that.

AG: Would you call it a visionary documentary?

BD: No. "Documentary" pretends towards objective reality, this pretends to Truth.

AG: So how would you sum it all up?

BD: Renaldo's intense dream and his conflict with the present – that's all the movie's about. I'd like to make more movies after this. The next movie Renaldo might be working in a factory, who knows? The next one will be more socially identifiable with. The next one will be different. It will be about Corruption, about Pride, about Vanity, and about Obsession. I'm giving away a lot here. I don't want to give it away.

November 1977
Ron Rosenbaum (Playboy) Interview, Burbank, California

Source: *Playboy – Entertainment for Men*, March 1978 issue, pp. 61-90

PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: BOB DYLAN
A CANDID CONVERSATION WITH THE VISIONARY WHOSE SONGS CHANGED THE TIMES

It was in March 1966 that PLAYBOY published the first full-length interview with Bob Dylan. In the intervening years, he has talked to journalists only rarely, and, shortly before completing his first feature film, he agreed to talk with us. We asked writer Ron Rosenbaum, who grew up listening to Dylan songs, to check in with the elusive artist. His report:

"Call it a simple twist of fate, to use a Dylan line, but perhaps psychic twist of fate is more accurate. Because there was something of a turning point in our ten day series of conversations when we exchanged confidences about psychics.

"Until that point, things had not been proceeding easily. Dylan has seldom been forthcoming with any answers, particularly in interview situations and has long been notorious for questioning the questions rather than answering them, replying with put-ons and tall tales and surrounding his real feelings with mystery and circumlocution. We would go round in circles, sometimes fascinating metaphysical circles, and I'd got a sense of his intellect but little of his heart. He hadn't given anyone a major interview for many years, but after my initial excitement at being chosen to do this one, I began to wonder whether Dylan really wanted to do it.

"It's probably unnecessary to explain why getting answers from Bob Dylan has come to mean so much to many people. One has only to recall how Dylan, born Robert Zimmerman in 1941 in Duluth, Minnesota, burst upon the early Sixties folk-music scene with an abrasive voice and an explosive intensity, how he created songs such as '*Blowin' in the Wind*' and '*The Times They Are A-Changin'*' that became anthems of the civil rights and antiwar movements. How he and his music raced through the Sixties at breakneck speed, leaving his folk followers behind and the politicos mystified with his electrifying, elliptical explorations of uncharted states of mind How, in songs such as '*Mr. Tambourine Man*,' '*Desolation Row*,' '*Like a Rolling Stone*' and '*Just Like a Woman*,' he created emotional road maps for an entire generation. How, in the midst of increasingly frenzied rock-'n'-roll touring, Dylan continued to surround the details of his personal life with mystery and wise-guy obfuscation, mystery that deepened ominously after his near-fatal motorcycle accident in 1966. And how, after a long period of bucolic retreat devoted to fatherhood, family and country music, he suddenly returned to the stage with big nationwide tours in 1974 and, most recently, in 1976 with the all-star rock-'n'-roll ensemble known as The Rolling Thunder Revue. How his latest songs, particularly on the '*Blood on the Tracks*' and '*Desire*' albums, take us into new and often painful investigations of love and lust, and pain and loss, that suggest the emotional predicaments of the Seventies in a way few others can approach.

"The anthologies that chronicle all of that are littered with the bodies of interviewers he's put on, put down or put off. I was wondering if I were on my way to becoming another statistic when we hit upon the psychic connection.

"Late one afternoon, Dylan began telling me about Tamara Rand, an L.A. psychic reader he'd been seeing, because when the world falls on your head, he said, **'you need someone who can tell you how to crawl out, which way to take.'** I presumed he was referring obliquely to the collapse of his 12-year marriage to Sara Dylan. (Since the child-custody battle was in progress as we talked, Dylan's lawyer refused to permit him to address that subject directly.) Dylan seemed concerned that I understand that Tamara was no con artist, that she had genuine psychic abilities. I assured him I could believe it because my sister, in addition to being a talented writer, has some remarkable psychic abilities and is in great demand in New York for

her prescient readings. Dylan asked her name (it's Ruth) and when I told him, he looked impressed. **'I've heard of her,'** he said. I think that made the difference, because after that exchange, Dylan became far more forthcoming with me. Some of the early difficulties of the interview might also be explained by the fact that Dylan .was physically and mentally drained from an intense three-month sprint to finish editing and dubbing '*Renaldo & Clara*,' the movie he'd been writing, directing and co-editing for a full two years. He looked pale, smoked a lot of cigarettes and seemed fidgety. The final step in the moviemaking process-the sound mix-was moving slowly, largely because of his own nervous perfectionism.

"Most of our talks took place in a little shack of a dressing room outside dubbing stage five at the Burbank Studios. Frequently, we'd be interrupted as Dylan would have to run onto the dubbing stage and watch the hundredth run-through of one of the film's two dozen reels to see if his detailed instructions had been carried out. I particularly remember one occasion when I accompanied him onto the dubbing stage. Onscreen, Renaldo, played by Bob Dylan, and Clara, played by Sara Dylan (the movie was shot before the divorce—though not long before), are interrupted in the midst of connubial foolery by a knock at the door. In walks Joan Baez, dressed in white from head to toe, carrying a red rose. She says she's come for Renaldo. When Dylan, as Renaldo, sees who it is, his jaw drops. At the dubbing console, one of the sound men stopped the film at the jaw-drop frame and asked, 'You want me to get rid of that footstep noise in the background, Bob?' **'What footstep noise?'** Dylan asked. 'When Joan comes in and we go to Renaldo, there's some hind of footstep noise in the background, maybe from outside the door.' **'Those aren't footsteps,'** said Dylan. **'That's the beating of Renaldo's heart.'** 'What makes you so sure?' the sound man asked teasingly. **'I know him pretty well,'** Dylan said, **'I know him by heart.'** 'You want it kept there, then?' **'I want it louder,'** Dylan said. He turned to me. **'You ever read that thing by Poe, "*The Tell-Tale Heart*"?'** I was surprised at how willing Dylan was to explain the details of his film; he'd never done that with his songs. But he's put two years and more than a piece of his heart into this five-hour epic and it seems clear that he wants to be taken seriously as a film maker with serious artistic ambitions.

"In the '*Proverbs of Hell*,' William Blake (one of Dylan's favorite poets) wrote: '*The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom*.' Eleven years ago, Dylan's motorcycle skidded of that road and almost killed him. But unlike most Dionysian Sixties figures, Dylan survived. He may not have reached the palace of wisdom (and, indeed, the strange palace of marble and stone he has been building at Malibu seems, according to some reports, to be sliding into the sea). But despite his various sorrows, he does seem to be bursting with exhilaration and confidence that he can still create explosive art without having to die in the explosion."

RR: Exactly 12 years ago, we published a long interview with you in this magazine, and there's a lot to catch up on. But we'd like at least to try to start at the beginning. Besides being a singer, a poet and now a film maker, you've also been called a visionary. Do you recall any visionary experiences while you were growing up?

BD: I had some amazing projections when I was a kid, but not since then. And those visions have been strong enough to keep me going through today.

RR: What were those visions like?

BD: They were a feeling of wonder. I projected myself toward what I might personally, humanly do in terms of creating any kinds of reality. I was born in, grew up in a place so foreign that you had to be there to picture it.

RR: Are you talking about Hibbing, Minnesota?

BD: It was all in upper Minnesota.

RR: What was the quality of those visionary experiences?

BD: Well, in the winter, everything was still, nothing moved. Eight months of that. You can put it together. You can have some amazing hallucinogenic experiences doing nothing but looking out your window. There is also the summer, when it gets hot and sticky and the air is very metallic. There is a lot of Indian spirit. The earth there is unusual, filled

with ore. So there is something happening that is hard to define. There is a magnetic attraction there. Maybe thousands and thousands of years ago, some planet bumped into the land there. There is a great spiritual quality throughout the Midwest. Very subtle, very strong, and that is where I grew up. New York was a dream.

RR: Why did you leave Minnesota?

BD: Well, there comes a time for all things to pass.

RR: More specifically, why the dream of New York?

BD: It was a dream of the cosmopolitan riches of the mind.

RR: Did you find them there?

BD: It was a great place for me to learn and to meet others who were on similar journeys.

RR: People like Allen Ginsberg, for instance?

BD: Not necessarily him. He was pretty established by the time I got there. But it was Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac who inspired me at first—and where I came from, there wasn't the sophisticated transportation you have now. To get to New York, you d have to go by thumb. Anyway, those were the old days when John Denver used to play sideman. Many people came out of that period of time. Actors, dancers, politicians, a lot of people were involved with that period of time.

RR: What period are you talking about?

BD: Real early Sixties.

RR: What made that time so special?

BD: I think it was the last go-round for people to gravitate to New York. People had gone to New York since the 1800s, I think. For me, it was pretty fantastic. I mean, it was like, there was a café—what was it called?—I forgot the name, but it was Aaron Burr's old livery stable. You know, just being in that area, that part of the world was enlightening.

RR: Why do you say it was the last go-round?

BD: I don't think it happened after that. I think it finished, New York died after that, late to middle Sixties.

RR: What killed it?

BD: Mass communication killed it. It turned into one big carnival side show. That is what I sensed and I got out of there when it was just starting to happen. The atmosphere changed from one of creativity and isolation to one where the attention would be turned more to the show. People were reading about themselves and believing it. I don't know when it happened. Sometime around Peter, Paul and Mary, when they got pretty big. It happened around the same time. For a long time, I was famous only in certain circles in New York, Philadelphia and Boston, and that was fine enough for me. I am an eyewitness to that time. I am one of the survivors of that period. You know as well as I do that a lot of people didn't make it. They didn't live to tell about it, anyway.

RR: Why do you think they didn't survive?

BD: People were still dealing with illusion and delusion at that time. The times really change and they don't change. There were different characters back then and there were things that were undeveloped that are fully developed now. But back then, there was space, space—well, there wasn't any pressure. There was all the time in the world to get it done. There wasn't any pressure, because no body knew about it. You know, I mean. music people were like a bunch of cotton pickers. They see you on the side of the road picking cotton, but nobody stops to give a shit. I mean, it wasn't that important. So Washington Square was a place where people you knew or met congregated every Sunday and it was like a world of music. You know the way New York is; I mean, there could be 20 different things happening in the same kitchen or in the same park; there could be 200 bands in one park in New York; there could be 15 jug bands, five bluegrass bands and an old crummy string band, 20 Irish confederate groups, a Southern mountain band, folk singers of all kinds and colors, singing *John Henry* work songs. There was bodies piled sky-high doing whatever they felt like doing. Bongo drums, conga drums, saxophone players. xylophone players, drummers of all nations and

nationalities. Poets who would rant and rave from the statues. You know, those things don't happen anymore. But then that was what was happening. It was all street. Cafés would be open all night. It was a European thing that never really took off. It has never really been a part of this country That is what New York was like when I got there.

RR: And you think that mass communications, such as *Time* magazine's putting Joan Baez on the cover—

BD: Mass communication killed it all. Oversimplification. I don't know whose idea it was to do that, but soon after, the people moved away.

RR: Just to stay on the track, what first turned you on to folk singing? You actually started out in Minnesota playing the electric guitar with a rock group, didn't you?

BD: Yeah. The first thing that turned me on to folk singing was Odetta. I heard a record of hers in a record store, back when you could listen to records right there in the store. That was in '58 or something like that. Right then and there, I went out and traded my electric guitar and amplifier for an acoustical guitar, a flat-top Gibson.

RR: What was so special to you about that Odetta record?

BD: Just something vital and personal. I learned all the songs on that record. It was her first and the songs were—*Mule Skinner*, *Jack of Diamonds*, *Water Boy*, *Buked and Scorned*.

RR: When did you learn to play the guitar?

BD: I saved the money I had made working on my daddy's truck and bought a Silvertone guitar from Sears Roebuck. I was 12. I just bought a book of chords and began to play.

RR: What was the first song you wrote?

BD: The first song I wrote was a song to Brigitte Bardot.

RR: Do you remember how it went?

BD: I don't recall too much of it. It had only one chord. Well, it is all in the heart. Anyway, from Odetta, I went to Harry Belafonte, the Kingston Trio, little by little uncovering more as I went along. Finally, I was doing nothing but Carter Family and Jesse Fuller songs. Then later I got to Woody Guthrie, which opened up a whole new world at the time. I was still only 19 or 20.

I was pretty fanatical about what I wanted to do, so after learning about 200 of Woody's songs, I went to see him and I waited for the right moment to visit him in a hospital in Morristown, New Jersey. I took a bus from New York, sat with him and sang his songs. I kept visiting him a lot and got on friendly terms with him. From that point on, it gets a little foggy.

RR: Folk singing was considered pretty weird in those days, wasn't it?

BD: It definitely was. *Sing Out* was the only magazine you could read about those people. They were special people and you kept your distance from them.

RR: What do you mean?

BD: Well, they were the type of people you just observed and learned from, but you would never approach them. *I* never would, anyway. I remember being too shy. But it took me a long time to realize the New York crowd wasn't that different from the singers I'd seen in my own home town. They were right there, on the backroad circuit, people like the Stanley Brothers, playing for a few nights. If I had known then what I do now, I probably would have taken off when I was 12 and followed Bill Monroe. 'Cause I could have gotten to the same place.

RR: Would you have gotten there sooner?

BD: Probably would have saved me a lot of time and hassles.

RR: This comes under the category of setting the record straight: By the time you arrived in New York, you'd changed your name from Robert Zimmerman to Bob Dylan. Was it because of Dylan Thomas?

BD: No. I haven't read that much of Dylan Thomas. It's a common thing to change your name. It isn't that incredible. Many people do it. People change their town, change their country. New appearance, new mannerisms. Some people have many names. I wouldn't pick a name unless I thought I was that person. Sometimes you are held back by your

name. Sometimes there are advantages to having a certain name. Names are labels so we can refer to one another. But deep inside us we don't have a name. We have no name. I just chose that name and it stuck.

RR: Do you know what Zimmerman means in German?

BD: My forebears were Russian. I don't know how they got a German name coming from Russia. Maybe they got their name coming off the boat or something. To make a big deal over somebody's name, you're liable to make a big deal about any little thing. But getting back to Dylan Thomas, it wasn't that I was inspired by reading some of his poetry and going "Aha!" and changing my name to Dylan. If I thought he was that great, I would have sung his poems, and could just as easily have changed my name to Thomas.

RR: Bob Thomas? It would have been a mistake.

BD: Well, that name changed me. I didn't sit around and think about it too much. That is who I felt I was.

RR: Do you deny being the *enfant terrible* in those days—do you deny the craziness of it all that has been portrayed?

BD: No, it's true. That's the way it was. But... can't stay in one place forever.

RR: Did the motorcycle accident you had in 1966 have anything to do with cooling you off, getting you to relax?

BD: Well, now you're jumping way ahead to another period of time... What was I doing? I don't know. It came time. Was it when I had the motorcycle accident? Well, I was straining pretty hard and couldn't have gone on living that way much longer. The fact that I made it through what I did is pretty miraculous. But, you know, sometimes you get too close to something and you got to get away from it to be able to see it. And something like that happened to me at the time.

RR: In a book you published during that period, *Tarantula*, you wrote an epitaph for yourself that begins: "Here lies Bob Dylan / murdered / from behind / by trembling flesh... ".

BD: Those were in my wild, unnatural moments. I'm glad those feelings passed.

RR: What were those days like?

BD: [*Pause*] **I don't remember.** [*Long pause*]

RR: There was a report in the press recently that you turned the Beatles on to grass for, the first time. According to the story, you gave Ringo Starr a toke at J.F.K. Airport and it was the first time for any of them. True?

BD: I'm surprised if Ringo said that. It don't sound like Ringo. I don't recall meeting him at J.F.K. Airport.

RR: OK. Who turned you on?

BD: Grass was everywhere in the clubs. It was always there in the jazz clubs and in the folk-music clubs. There was just grass and it was available to musicians in those days. And in coffeehouses way back in Minneapolis. That's where I first came into contact with it, I'm sure. I forget when or where, really.

RR: Why did the musicians like grass so much?

BD: Being a musician means—depending on how far you go—getting to the depths of where you are at. And most any musician would try anything to get to those depths, because playing music is an immediate thing—as opposed to putting paint on a canvas, which is a calculated thing. Your spirit flies when you are playing music. So, with music, you tend to look deeper and deeper inside yourself to find the music. That's why, I guess, grass was around those clubs. I know the whole scene has changed now; I mean, pot is almost a legal thing. But in the old days, it was just for a few people.

RR: Did psychedelics have a similar effect on you?

BD: No. Psychedelics never influenced me. I don't know, I think Timothy Leary had a lot to do with driving the last nails into the coffin of that New York scene we were talking about. When psychedelics happened, everything became irrelevant. Because that had

nothing to do with making music or writing poems or trying to really find yourself in that day and age.

RR: But people thought they were doing just that—finding themselves.

BD: People were deluded into thinking they were something that they weren't: birds, airplanes, fire hydrants, whatever. People were walking around thinking they were stars.

RR: As far as your music was concerned, was there a moment when you made a conscious decision to work with an electric band?

BD: Well, it had to get there. It had to go that way for me. Because that's where I started and eventually it just got back to that. I couldn't go on being the lone folkie out there, you know, strumming *Blowin' in the Wind* for three hours every night. I hear my songs as part of the music, the musical background.

RR: When you hear your songs in your mind, it's not just you strumming alone, you mean?

BD: Well, no, it is to begin with. But then I always hear other instruments, how they should sound. The closest I ever got to the sound I hear in my mind was on individual bands in the *Blonde on Blonde* album. It's that thin, that wild mercury sound. It's metallic and bright gold, with whatever that conjures up. That's my particular sound. I haven't been able to succeed in getting it all the time. Mostly, I've been driving at a combination of guitar, harmonica and organ, but now I find myself going into territory that has more percussion in it and [pause] **rhythms of the soul.**

RR: Was that wild mercury sound in *I Want You*?

BD: Yeah, it was in *I Want You*. It was in a lot of that stuff. It was in the album before that, too.

RR: *Highway 61 Revisited*?

BD: Yeah. Also in *Bringing It All Back Home*. That's the sound I've always heard. Later on, the songs got more defined, but it didn't necessarily bring more power to them. The sound was whatever happened to be available at the time. I have to get back to the sound, to the sound that will bring it all through me.

RR: Can't you just reassemble the same musicians?

BD: Not really. People change, you know, they scatter in all directions. People's lives get complicated. They tend to have more distractions, so they can't focus on that fine, singular purpose.

RR: You're searching for people?

BD: No, not searching, the people are there. But I just haven't paid as much attention to it as I should have. I haven't felt comfortable in a studio since I worked with Tom Wilson. The next move for me is to have a permanent band. You know, usually I just record whatever's available at the time. That's my thing, you know, and it's—it's legitimate. I mean, I do it because I have to do it that way. I don't want to keep doing it, because I would like to get my life more in order. But until now, my recording sessions have tended to be last-minute affairs. I don't really use all the technical studio stuff. My songs are done live in the studio; they always have been and they always will be done that way. That's why they're alive. No matter what else you say about them, they are alive. You know, what Paul Simon does or Rod Stewart does or Crosby, Stills and Nash do—a record is not that monumental for me to make. It's just a record of songs.

RR: Getting back to your transition from folk to rock, the period when came out with *Highway 61* must have been exciting.

BD: Those were exciting times. We were doing it before anybody knew we would—or could. We didn't know what it was going to turn out to be. Nobody thought of it as folk-rock at the time. There were some people involved in it like The Byrds, and I remember Sonny and Cher and the Turtles and the early Rascals. It began coming out on the radio. I mean, I had a couple of hits in a row. That was the most I ever had in a row—two. The top ten was filled with that kind of sound—the Beatles, too—and it was exciting, those days were exciting. It was the sound of the streets. It still is. I symbolically hear that sound wherever I am.

RR: You hear the sound of the street?

BD: That ethereal twilight light, you know. It's the sound of the street with the sunrays, the sun shining down at a particular time, on a particular type of building. A particular type of people walking on a particular type of street. It's an outdoor sound that drifts even into open windows that you can hear. The sound of bells and distant railroad trains and arguments in apartments and the clinking of silverware and knives and forks and beating with leather straps. It's all—it's all there. Just lack of a jackhammer, you know.

RR: You mean if a jackhammer were—

BD: Yeah, no jackhammer sounds, no airplane sounds. All pretty natural sounds. It's water, you know water trickling down a brook. It's light flowing through the—

RR: Late-afternoon light?

BD: No, usually it's the crack of dawn. Music filters out to me in the crack of dawn.

RR: The "*jingle jangle morning*"?

BD: Right.

RR: After being up all night?

BD: Sometimes. You get a little spacy when you've been up all night, so you don't really have the power to form it. But that's the sound I'm trying to get across. I'm not just up there re-creating old blues tunes or trying to invent some surrealistic rhapsody.

RR: It's the sound that you want.

BD: Yeah, it's the sound and the words. Words don't interfere with it. They— they— punctuate it. You know, they give it purpose. [Pause] **And all the ideas for my songs, all the influences, all come out of that. All the influences, all the feelings, all the ideas come from that. I'm not doing it to see how good I can sound, or how perfect the melody can be, or how intricate the details can be woven or how perfectly written something can be. I don't care about those things.**

RR: The sound is that compelling to you?

BD: Mmm-hnh.

RR: When did you first hear it, or feel it?

BD: I guess it started way back when I was growing up.

RR: Not in New York?

BD: Well, I took it to New York. I wasn't born in New York. I was given some direction there, but I took it, too. I don't think I could ever have done it in New York. I would have been too beaten down.

RR: It was formed by the sounds back in the ore country of Minnesota?

BD: Or the lack of sound. In the city, there is nowhere you can go where you don't hear sound. You are never alone. I don't think I could have done it there. Just the struggle of growing up would he immense and would really distort things if you wanted to be an artist. Well... maybe not. A lot of really creative people come out of New York. But I don't know anyone like myself. I meet a lot of people from New York that I get along with fine, and share the same ideas, but I got something different in my soul. Like a spirit. It's like being from the Smoky Mountains or the backwoods of Mississippi. It is going to make you a certain type of person if you stay 20 years in a place.

RR: With your love of the country, what made you leave Woodstock in 1969 and go back to the Village?

BD: It became stale and disillusioning. It got too crowded, with the wrong people throwing orders. And the old people were afraid to come out on the street. The rainbow faded.

RR: But the Village, New York City, wasn't the answer, either.

BD: The stimulation had vanished. Everybody was in a pretty down mood. It was over.

RR: Do you think that old scene you've talked about might be creeping back into New York?

BD: Well, I was there last summer. I didn't sense any of it. There are a lot of rock-'n'-roll clubs and jazz clubs and Puerto Rican poetry clubs, but as far as learning something new, learning to teach... New York is full of teachers, that is obvious, but it is pretty depressing now. To make it on the street, you just about have to beg.

RR: So now you're in California Is there any kind of scene that you can be part of?

BD: I'm only working out here most, or all, of the time, so I don't know what this town is really like. I like San Francisco. I find it full of tragedy and comedy. But if I want to go to a city in this country, I will still go to New York. There are cities all over the world to go to. I don't know, maybe I am just an old dog, so maybe I feel like I've been around so long I am looking for something new to do and it ain't there. I was looking for some space to create what I want to do. I am only interested in that these days. I don't care so much about hanging out.

RR: Do you feel older than when you sang, "*I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now*"?

BD: No, I don't feel old. I don't feel old at all. But I feel like there are certain things that don't attract me anymore that I used to succumb to very easily.

RR: Such as?

BD: Just the everyday vices.

RR: Do you think that you have managed to resist having to grow up or have you found a way of doing it that is different from conventional growing up?

BD: I don't really think in terms of growing up or not growing up. I think in terms of being able to fulfill yourself. Don't forget, you see, I've been doing what I've been doing since I was very small, so I have never known anything else. I have never had to quit my job to do this. This is all that I have ever done in my life. So I don't think in terms of economics or status or what people think of me one way or the other.

RR: Would you say you still have a rebellious, or punk, quality toward the rest of the world?

BD: Punk quality?

RR: Well, you're still wearing dark sunglasses, right?

BD: Yeah.

RR: Is that so people won't see your eyes?

BD: Actually, it's just habit-forming after a while, I still do wear dark sunglasses. There is no profound reason for it, I guess. Some kind of insecurity, I don't know: I like dark sunglasses. Have I had these on through every interview session?

RR: Yes. We haven't seen your eyes yet.

BD: Well, Monday for sure. [*The day that* PLAYBOY *photos were to be taken for the opening page*]

RR: Aside from the dark glasses, is it something in the punk quality of Elvis or James Dean that makes you dress a certain way or act a certain way?

BD: No. It's from the early Sixties. Elvis was there. He was there when there wasn't anybody there. He was Elvis and everybody knows about what Elvis did. He did it to me just like he did it to everybody else. Elvis was in that certain age group and I followed him right from *Blue Moon in Kentucky*. And there were others; I admired Buddy Holly a lot. But Elvis was never really a punk. And neither was James Dean a punk.

RR: What quality did Dean represent?

BD: He let his heart do the talking. That was his one badge. He was effective for people of that age, but as you grow older, you have different experiences and you tend to identify with artists who had different meanings for you.

RR: Let's talk some more about your influences. What musicians do you listen to today.

BD: I still listen to the same old black-and-blue blues. Tommy McClennan, Lightnin' Hopkins, the Carter Family, the early Carlyles. I listen to Big Maceo, Robert Johnson. Once in a while, I listen to Woody Guthrie again. Among the more recent people, Fred McDowell, Gary Stewart. I like Memphis Minnie a whole lot. Blind Willie McTell. I like bluegrass music. I listen to foreign music, too. I like Middle Eastern music a whole lot.

RR: Such as?

BD: Om Kalthoum.

RR: Who is that?

BD: She was a great Egyptian singer. I first heard of her when I was in Jerusalem.

RR: She was an Egyptian singer who was popular in Jerusalem?

BD: I think she's popular all over the Middle East. In Israel, too. She does mostly love and prayer-type songs, with violin and-drum accompaniment. Her father chanted those prayers and I guess she was so good when she tried singing behind his back that he allowed her to sing professionally, and she's dead now but not forgotten. She's great. She really is. Really great.

RR: Any popular stuff?

BD: Well, Nana Maskouri.

RR: How about the Beatles?

BD: I've always liked the way George Harrison plays guitar—restrained and good. As for Lennon, well, I was encouraged by his book [*In His Own Write*]**. Or the publishers were encouraged, because they asked me to write a book and that's how *Tarantula* came about. John has taken poetics pretty far in popular music. A lot of his work is overlooked, but if you examine it, you'll find key expressions that have never been said before to push across his point of view. Things that are symbolic of some inner reality and probably will never be said again.**

RR: Do you listen to your own stuff?

BD: Not so much.

RR: What about your literary influences? You've mentioned Kerouac and Ginsberg. Whom do you read now?

BD: Rilke. Chekhov. Chekhov is my favorite writer. I like Henry Miller. I think he's the greatest American writer.

RR: Did you meet Miller?

BD: Yeah, I met him. Years ago. Played ping-pony with him.

RR: Did you read *Catcher in the Rye* as a kid?

BD: I must have, you know. Yeah, I think so.

RR: Did you identify with Holden Caulfield?

BD: Uh,. what was his story?

RR: He was a lonely kid in prep school who ran away and decided that everyone else was phony and that he was sensitive.

BD: I must have identified with him.

RR: We've been talking about the arts, and as we've been speaking, you've been in the midst of editing your first film, *Renaldo & Clara*. What do you feel you can do in films that you can't do in songs?

BD: I can take songs up to a higher power. The movie to me is more a painting than music. It is a painting. It's a painting coming alive off a wall. That's why we're making it. Painters can contain their artistic turmoil; in another age, moviemakers would most likely he painters.

RR: Although *Renaldo & Clara* is the first movie you've produced, directed and acted in, there was a documentary made in 1966 that marked your first appearance in a film—*Dont Look Back*. What did you think of it.

BD: *Dont Look Back* was... somebody else's movie. It was a deal worked out with a film company, but I didn't really play any part in it. When I saw it in a moviehouse, I was shocked at what had been done. I didn't find out until later that the camera had been on me all the time. That movie was done by a mar. who took it all out of context It was documented from his personal point of view. The movie was dishonest, it was a propaganda movie. I don't think it was accurate at all in terms of showing my formative years. It showed only one side. He made it seem like I wasn't doing anything but living in hotel rooms, playing the typewriter and holding press conferences for journalists. All that is true, you know. Throwing some bottles, there's something about it in the movie. Joan Baez is in it. But it's one-sided. Let's not lean on it too hard. It just wasn't representative of what was happening in the Sixties.

RR: Don't you feel it captured the frenzy of your tour, even though it focused on you in terms of stardom?

BD: I wasn't really a star in those days, any more than I'm a star these days. I was very obviously confused then as to what my purpose was. It was pretty early, you know. *The Times They Are A-Changin'* was on the English charts then, so it had to be pretty early.

RR: And you didn't really know what you were doing then?

BD: Well, look what I did after that. Look what I did after that. I didn't really start to develop until after that. I mean, I did, but I didn't. *Dont Look Back* was a little too premature. I should have been left alone at that stage.

RR: You were involved in another movie around that period—1966—that was never released, called *Eat the Document*. How did that happen?

BD: That started as a television special. I wasn't the maker of that film, either. I was the—I was the victim. They had already shot film, but at that time, of course, I did—I had a—if I hadn't gotten into that motorcycle accident, they would have broadcast it, and that would have been that. But I was sort of—I was taken out of it, you know, and—I think it was the fall of that year. I had a little more time to, you know, concentrate on what was happening to me and what had happened. Anyway, what had happened was that they had made another *Dont Look Back*, only this time it was for television. I had nothing better to do than to see the film. All of it, including unused footage. And it was obvious from looking at the film that it was garbage. It was miles and miles of garbage. That was my introduction to film. My film concept was all formed in those early days when I was looking at that footage.

RR: From looking at those miles of garbage, you got your concept of film?

BD: Yeah, it was mostly rejected footage, which I found beauty in. Which probably tells you more—that I see beauty where other people don't.

RR: That reminds us of a poem you wrote for the jacket of an early Joan Baez album, in which you claimed that you always thought something had to be ugly before you found it beautiful. And at some point in the poem, you described listening to Joan sing and suddenly deciding that beauty didn't have to start out by being ugly

BD: I was very hung up on Joan at the time [*Pause*] **I think I was just trying to tell myself I wasn't hung up on her.**

RR: OK. Would you talk some more about the film concept you got from the rejected footage?

BD: Well, up until that time, they had been concerned with the linear story line. It was on one plane and in one dimension only. And the more I looked at the film, the more I realized that you could get more onto film than just one train of thought My mind works that way, anyway. We tend to work on different levels. So I was seeing a lot of those levels in the footage. But technically, I didn't know how to do what my mind was telling me could be done.

RR: What did you feel could be done?

BD: Well, well, now, film is a series of actions and reactions, you know. And it's trickery. You're playing with illusion. What seems to be a simple affair is actually quite contrived. And the stronger your point of view is, the stronger your film will be.

RR: Would you elaborate?

BD: You're trying to get a message through. So there are many ways to deliver that message. Let's say you have a message: "White is white." Bergman would say, "White is white" in the space of an hour—or what seems to be an hour. Bunuel might say, "White is black, and black is white, but white is really white." And it's all really the same message.

RR: And how would Dylan say it?

BD: Dylan would probably not even say it. [*Laughs*] **He would—he'd assume you'd know that.** [*Laughs*]

RR: You wriggled out of that one.

BD: I'd say people will always believe in something if they feel it to be true. Just knowing it's true is not enough. If you feel in your gut that it's true, well, then, you can be pretty much assured that it's true.

RR: So that a film made by someone who feels in his guts that white is white will give the feeling to the audience that white is white without having to say it.

BD: Yes. Exactly.

RR: Let's talk about the message of *Renaldo & Clara*. It appears to us to be a personal yet fictional film in which you, Joan Baez and your former wife, Sara, play leading roles. You play Renaldo, Baez plays a "woman in white" and Sara plays Clara. There is also a character in the film called Bob Dylan played by someone else. It is composed of footage from your Rolling Thunder Revue tour and fictional scenes performed by all of you as actors. Would you tell us basically what the movie's about?

BD: It's about the essence of man being alienated from himself and how, in order to free himself, to be reborn, he has to go outside himself. You can almost say that he dies in order to look at time and by strength of will can return to the same body.

RR: He can return by strength of will to the same body... and to Clara?

BD: Clara represents to Renaldo everything in the material world he's ever wanted. Renaldo's needs are few. He doesn't know it, though, at that particular time.

RR: What are his needs?

BD: A good guitar and a dark street.

RR: The guitar because he loves music, but why the dark street?

BD: Mostly because he needs to hide.

RR: From whom?

BD: From the demon within. [*Pause*] **But what we all know is that you can't hide on a dark street from the demon within. And there's our movie.**

RR: Renaldo finds that out in the film?

BD: He tries to escape from the demon within, but he discovers that the demon is, in fact, a mirrored reflection of Renaldo himself.

RR: OK. Given the personalities involved, how do you define the relation ship between you, your personal life, and the film?

BD: No different from Hitchcock making a movie. I am the overseer.

RR: Overseeing various versions of yourself?

BD: Well, certain truths I know. Not necessarily myself but a certain accumulation of experience that has become real to me and a knowledge that I acquired on the road.

RR: And what are those truths?

BD: One is that if you try to be anyone but yourself, you will fail; if you are not true to your own heart, you will fail. Then again, there's no success like failure.

RR: And failure's no success at all.

BD: Oh, well, we're not looking to succeed. Just by our being and acting alive, we succeed. You fail only when you let death creep in and take over a part of your life that should be alive.

RR: How does death creep in?

BD: Death don't come knocking at the door. It's there in the morning when you wake up.

RR: How is it there?

BD: Did you ever clip your fingernails, cut your hair? Then you experience death.

RR: Look, in the film, Joan Baez turns to you at one point and says, "You never give any straight answers." Do you?

BD: She is confronting Renaldo.

RR: Evasiveness isn't only in the mind; it can also come out in an interview.

BD: There are no simple answers to these questions...

RR: Aren't you teasing the audience when you have scenes played by Baez and Sara, real people in your life, and then expect the viewers to set aside their preconceptions as to their relationship to you?

BD: No, no. They shouldn't even think they know anyone in this film. It's all in the context of *Renaldo and Clara* and there's no reason to get hung up on who's who in the movie.

RR: What about scenes such as the one in which Baez asks you, "What if we had gotten married back then?"

BD: Seems pretty real, don't it?

RR: Yes.

BD: Seems pretty real. Just like in a Bergman movie, those things seem real. There's a lot of spontaneity that goes on. Usually, the people in his films know each other, so they can interrelate. There's life and breath in every frame because everyone knew each other.

RR: All right, another question: In the movie, Ronnie Hawkins, a 300-pound Canadian rock singer, goes by the name of Bob Dylan. So is there a real Bob Dylan?

BD: In the movie?

RR: Yes.

BD: In the movie, no. He doesn't even appear in the movie. His voice is there, his songs are used, but Bob's not in the movie. It would be silly. Did you ever see a Picasso painting with Picasso in the picture? You only see his work. Now, I'm not interested in putting a picture of myself on the screen, because that's not going to do anybody any good, including me.

RR: Then why use the name Bob Dylan at all in the movie?

BD: In order to legitimize this film. We confronted it head on: The persona of Bob Dylan is in the movie so we could get rid of it. There should no longer be any mystery as to who or what he is—he's there, speaking in all kinds of tongues, and there's even someone else claiming to be him, so he's covered.

This movie is obvious, you know. Nobody's hiding anything. It's all right there. The rabbits are falling out of the hat before the movie begins.

RR: Do you really feel it's an accessible movie?

BD: Oh, perfectly. Very open movie.

RR: Even though Mr. Bob Dylan and Mrs. Bob Dylan are played by different people...

BD: Oh, yeah.

RR: And you don't know for sure which one he is?

BD: Sure. We could make a movie and you could be Bob Dylan. It wouldn't matter.

RR: But if there are two Bob Dylans in the film and Renaldo is always changing...

BD: Well, it could be worse. It could be three or four. Basically, it's a simple movie.

RR: How did you decide to make it?

BD: As I said, I had the idea for doing my own film back in '66. And I buried it until '76. My lawyer used to tell me there was a future in movies. So I said, "What kind of future?" He said, "Well, if you can come up with a script, an outline and get money from a big distributor." But I knew I couldn't work that way. I can't betray my vision on a little piece of paper in hopes of getting some money from somebody. In the final analysis, it turned out that I had to make the movie all by myself, with people who would work with me, who trusted me. I went on the road in '76 to make the money for this movie. My last two tours were to raise the money for it.

RR: How much of your money are you risking?

BD: I'd rather not say. It is quite a bit, but I didn't go into the bank. The budget was like $600,000, but it went over that.

RR: Did you get pleasure out of the project?

BD: I feel it's a story that means a great deal to me, and I got to do what I always wanted to do—make a movie. When something like that happens, it's like stopping time, and you can make people live into that moment. Not many things can do that in your daily life. You can be distracted by many things. But the main point is to make it meaningful to someone.

Take *Shane*, for example. That moved me. *On the Waterfront* moved me. So when I go to see a film, I expect to be moved. I don't want to go see a movie just to kill time, or to

have it just show me something I'm not aware of. I want to be moved, because that's what art is supposed to do, according to all the great theologians. Art is supposed to take you out of your chair. It's supposed to move you from one space to another.

***Renaldo & Clara* is not meant to put a strain on you. It's a movie to be enjoyed as a movie. I know nothing about film, I'm not a film maker. On the other hand, I do consider myself a film maker because I made this film: So I don't know... If it doesn't move you, then it's a grand, grand failure.**

RR: Is there any way of avoiding the fact that people *will* undoubtedly make the assumption we've been discussing—that your own myths will subvert what you say is the purpose of the movie?

BD: Don't forget—I'm not a myth to myself. Only to others. If others didn't create that myth of Bob Dylan, there would be no myth of Bob Dylan in the movie.

RR: Would there even be a movie? Or the money to finance it?

BD: I doubt it.

RR: So aren't you caught in a bind?

BD: You mean by talking out of both sides of my mouth?

RR: Well, you've made a film that you'd like people to take on its own merits, with characters you'd like them to accept; yet the main reason people will see it is that they'll want to know about Bob Dylan and Joan Baez and Sara Dylan...

BD: I would hope so, yeah.

RR: How do you get around that?

BD: What's there to get around?

RR: Your stated purpose that people shouldn't take their preconceptions to the film.

BD: Well, they shouldn't. No, I don't know how to get around that.

RR: Could it be that the movie is really intended to take on the gossip about you head on?

BD: There's truth to that. It does take it on in the sense that gossip is information. Gossip is a weapon traveling through the air. It whispers. But it does have a tremendous influence. It's one of the driving forces. How did we start talking about gossip?

RR: Well—

BD: OK, gossip. What we're doing now is gossiping.

RR: In what sense?

BD: We would have more in common if we went out fishing and said nothing. It would be a more valuable experience, anyway, than sitting around and talking about this movie, or life and death, or gossip, or anything we've been talking about. I personally believe that. That's why I don't sit around and talk too much.

RR: All right, since there aren't any fishing rods around, let's continue gossiping for a while longer.

BD: OK.

RR: One last try: If there's anything to the interpretation that this movie was made in the spirit of "All right, if all you people out there want to talk about Dylan breaking up with his wife, about his having an affair with Joan Baez, I'll just put those people into my film and rub people's noses in the gossip, because only I know the truth?"

BD: It's not entirely true, because that's not what the movie is about. I'm not sure how much of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez concern anybody. To me, it isn't important. It's old news to me, so I don't think it's of much interest to anybody. If it is, fine. But I don't think it's a relevant issue. The movie doesn't deal with anything current. This is two years ago. I'm smart enough to know I shouldn't deal with any current subject on an emotional level, because usually it won't last. You need experience to write, or to sing or to act. You don't just wake up and say you're going to do it. This movie is taking experience and turning it into something else. It's not a gossipy movie.

RR: We began this discussion of your movie by comparing film makers to painters. Were you as interested in painting as in, say, rock music when you were growing up?

BD: Yeah, I've always painted. I've always held on to that one way or another.

RR: Do you feel you use colors in the same way you use notes or chords?

BD: Oh, yeah. There's much information you could get on the meaning of colors. Every color has a certain mood and feeling. For instance, red is a very vital color. There're a lot of reds in this movie, a lot of blues. A lot of cobalt blue.

RR: Why cobalt blue?

BD: It's the color of dissension.

RR: Did you study painting?

BD: A lot of the ideas I have were influenced by an old man who had definite ideas on life and the universe and nature—all that matters.

RR: Who was he?

BD: Just an old man. His name wouldn't mean anything to you. He came to this country from Russia in the Twenties, started out as a boxer and ended up painting portraits of women.

RR: You don't want to mention his name, just to give him a plug?

BD: His first name was Norman. Every time I mention somebody's name, it's like they get a tremendous amount of distraction and irrelevancy in their lives. For instance, there's this lady in L.A. I respect a lot who reads palms. Her name's Tamara Rand. She's for real, she's not a gypsy fortuneteller. But she's accurate! She'll take a look at your hand and tell you things you feel but don't really understand about where you're heading, what the future looks like. She's a surprisingly hopeful person.

RR: Are you sure you want to know if there's bad news in your future?

BD: Well, sometimes when the world falls on your head, you know there are ways to get out, but you want to know which way. Usually, there's someone who can tell you how to crawl out, which way to take.

RR: Getting back to colors and chords, are there particular musical keys that have personalities or moods the way colors do for you?

BD: Yeah. B major and B-flat major.

RR: How would you describe them?

BD: [*Pause*] **Each one is hard to define. Assume the characteristic that is true of both of them and you'll find you're not sure whether you're speaking to them or to their echo.**

RR: What does a major key generally conjure up for you?

BD: I think any major key deals with romance.

RR: And the minor keys?

BD: The supernatural.

RR: What about other specific keys?

BD: I find C major to be the key of strength, but also the key of regret. E major is the key of confidence. A-flat major is the key of renunciation.

RR: Since we're back on the subject of music, what new songs have you planned?

BD: I have new songs now that are unlike anything I've ever written.

RR: Really?

BD: Yes.

RR: What are they like?

BD: Well, you'll see. I mean, unlike anything I've ever done. You couldn't even say that *Blood on the Tracks* or *Desire* have led up to this stuff. I mean, it's that far gone, it's that far out there. I'd rather not talk more about them until they're out.

RR: When the character Bob Dylan in your movie speaks the words "Rock 'n' roll is the answer," what does he mean?

BD: He's speaking of the sound and the rhythm. The drums and the rhythm are the answer. Get into the rhythm of it and you will lose yourself; you will forget about the brutality of it all. Then you will lose your identity. That's what he's saying.

RR: Does that happen to you, to the real Bob Dylan?

BD: Well, that's easy. When you're playing music and it's going well, you do lose your identity, you become totally subservient to the music you're doing in your very being.

RR: Do you feel possessed?

BD: It's dangerous, because its effect is that you believe that you can transcend and cope with anything. That it is the real life, that you've struck at the heart of life itself and you are on top of your dream. And there's no down. But later on, backstage, you have a different point of view.

RR: When you're onstage, do you feel the illusion that death can't get you?

BD: Death can't get you at all. Death's not here to get anybody. It's the appearance of the Devil, and the Devil is a coward, so knowledge will overcome that.

RR: What do you mean?

BD: The Devil is everything false, the Devil will go as deep as you let the Devil go. You can leave yourself open to that. If you understand what that whole scene is about, you can easily step aside. But if you want the confrontation to begin with, well, there's plenty of it. But then again, if you believe you have a purpose and a mission, and not much time to carry it out, you don't bother about those things.

RR: Do you think you have a purpose and a mission?

BD: Obviously.

RR: What is it?

BD: Henry Miller **said it: The role of an artist is to inoculate the world with disillusionment.**

RR: To create rock music, you used to have to be against the system, a desperado. Is settling down an enemy of rock?

BD: No. You can be a priest and be in rock 'n' roll. Being a rock-'n'-roll singer is no different from being a house painter. You climb up as high as you want to. You're asking me, is rock, is the lifestyle of rock 'n' roll at odds with the lifestyle of society in general?

RR: Yes. Do you need to be in some way outside society, or in some way an outlaw, some way a—

BD No. Rock 'n' roll forms its own society. It's a world of its own. The same way the sports world is.

RR: But didn't you feel that it was valuable to bum around and all that sort of thing?

BD: Yes. But not necessarily, because you can bum around and wind up being a lawyer, you know. There isn't anything definite. Or any blueprint to it.

RR: So future rock stars could just as easily go to law school?

BD: For some people, it might be fine. But, getting back to that again, you have to have belief. You must have a purpose. You must believe that you-can disappear through walls. Without that belief, you're not going to become a very good rock singer, or pop singer, or folk-rock singer, or you're not going to become a very good lawyer. Or a doctor. You must know why you're doing what you're doing.

RR: Why are you doing what you're doing?

BD: [*Pause*] **Because I don't know anything else to do. I'm good at it.**

RR: How would you describe "it"?

BD: I'm an artist. I try to create art.

RR: How do you feel about your songs when you perform them years later? Do you feel your art has endured?

BD: How many singers feel the same way ten years later that they felt when they wrote tile song? Wait till it gets to be 20 years, you know? Now, there's a certain amount of act that you can put on, you know, you can get through on it, but there's got to be something to it that is real—not just for the moment. And a lot of my songs don't work. I wrote a lot of them just by gut—because my gut told me to write them—and they usually don't work so good as the years go on. A lot of them do work. With those, there's some truth about every one of them. And I don't think I'd be singing if I weren't writing, you know. I would have no reason or purpose to be out there singing. I mean, I don't consider myself... the life of the party. [*Laughs*]

RR: You've given new life to some songs in recent performances, such as *I Pity the Poor Immigrant* in the Rolling Thunder tour.

BD: Oh, yes. I've given new life to a lot of them. Because I believe in them, basically. You know, I believe in them. So I do give them new life. And that can always be done. I rewrote *Lay, Lady, Lay*, too. No one ever mentioned that.

RR: You changed it to a much raunchier, less pretty kind of song.

BD: Exactly. A lot of words to that song have changed. I recorded it originally surrounded by a bunch of other songs on the *Nashville Skyline* album. That was the tone of the session. Once everything was set, that was the way it came out. And it was fine for that time, but I always had a feeling there was more to the song than that.

RR: Is it true that *Lay, Lady, Lay*, was originally commissioned for *Midnight Cowboy*?

BD: That's right. They wound up using Freddy Neil's tune.

RR: How did it feel doing *Blowin' in the Wind* after all those years during your last couple of tours?

BD: I think I'll always be able to do that. There are certain songs that I will always be able to do. They will always have just as much meaning, if not more, as time goes on.

RR: What about *Like a Rolling Stone*?

BD: That was a great tune, yeah. It's the dynamics in the rhythm that make up *Like a Rolling Stone* and all of the lyrics. I tend to base all my songs on the old songs, like the old folk songs, the old blues tunes; they are always good. They always make sense.

RR: Would you talk a little about how specific songs come to you?

BD: They come to me when I am most isolated in space and time. I reject a lot of inspiring lines.

RR: They're too good?

BD: I reject a lot. I kind of know myself well enough to know that the line might be good and it is the first line that gives you inspiration and then it's just like riding a bull. That is the rest of it. Either you just stick with it or you don't. And if you believe that what you are doing is important, then you will stick with it no matter what.

RR: There are lines that are like riding wild bulls?

BD: There are lines like that. A lot of lines that would be better off just staying on a printed page and finishing up as poems. I forget a lot of the lines. During the day, a lot of lines will come to me that I will just say are pretty strange and I don't have anything better to do. I try not to pay too much attention to those wild. obscure lines.

RR: You say you get a single line and then you ride it. Does the melody follow after you write out the whole song?

BD: I usually know the melody before she song.

RR: And it is there, waiting for that first line?

BD: Yeah.

RR: Do you hear it easily?

BD: The melody? Sometimes, and sometimes I have to find it.

RR: Do you work regularly? Do you get up every morning and practice?

BD: A certain part of every day I have to play.

RR: Has your playing become more complex?

BD: No. Musically not. I can hear more and my melodies now are more rhythmic than they ever have been, but, really, I am still with those same three chords. But, I mean, I'm not Segovia or Montoya. I don't practice 12 hours a day.

RR: Do you practice using your voice, too?

BD: Usually, yeah, when I'm rehearsing, especially, or when I'm writing a song, I'll be singing it.

RR: Someone said that when you gave up cigarettes, your voice changed. Now we see you're smoking again. Is your voice getting huskier again?

BD: No, you know, you can do anything with your voice if you put your mind to it. I mean, you can become a ventriloquist or you can become an imitator of other people's voices. I'm usually just stuck with my own voice. I can do a few other people's voices.

RR: Whose voices can you imitate?

BD: Richard Widmark. Sydney Greenstreet. Peter Lorre. I like those voices. They really had distinctive voices in the early talkie films. Nowadays, you go to a movie and you can't tell one voice from the other. Jane Fonda sounds like Tatum O'Neal.

RR: as your attitude toward women changed much in your songs?

BD: Yeah; in the early period, I was writing more about objection, obsession or rejection. Superimposing my own reality on that which seemed to have no reality of its own.

RR: How did those opinions change?

BD: From neglect.

RR: From neglect?

BD: As you grow, things don't reach you as much as when you're still forming opinions.

RR: You mean you get hurt less easily?

BD: You get hurt over other matters than when you were 17. The energy of hurt isn't enough to create art.

RR: So if the women in your songs have become more real, if there are fewer goddesses—

BD: The goddess isn't real. A pretty woman as a goddess is just up there on a pedestal. The flower is what we are really concerned about here. The opening and the closing, the growth, the bafflement. You don't lust after flowers.

RR: Your regard for women, then, has changed?

BD: People are people to me. I don't single out women as anything to get hung up about.

RR: But in the past?

BD: In the past, I was guilty of that shameless crime.

RR: You're claiming to be completely rehabilitated?

BD: In that area, I don't have any serious problems.

RR: There's a line in your film in which someone says to Sara, "I need you because I need your magic to protect me."

BD: Well, the real magic of women is that throughout the ages, they've had to do all the work and yet they can have a sense of humor.

RR: That's throughout the ages. What about women now?

BD: Well, here's the new woman, right? Nowadays, you have the concept of a new woman, but the new woman is nothing without a man.

RR: What would the new woman say to that?

BD: I don't know what the new woman would say The new woman is the impulsive woman...

RR: There's another line in your movie about "the ultimate woman." What is the ultimate woman?

BD: A woman without prejudice.

RR: Are there many?

BD: There are as many as you can see. As many as can touch you.

RR: So you've run into a lot of ultimate women?

BD: Me, personally? I don't run into that many people. I'm working most of the time. I really don't have time for all that kind of intrigue.

RR: Camus said that chastity is an essential condition for creativity. Do you agree?

BD: He was speaking there of the disinvolvement with pretense.

RR: Wasn't he speaking of sexual chastity?

BD: You mean he was saying you have to stay celibate to create?

RR: That's one interpretation.

BD: Well, he might have been on to something there. It could have worked for him.

RR: When you think about rock and the rhythm of the heartbeat is it tied into love in some way?

BD: The heartbeat. Have you ever lain with somebody when your hearts were beating in the same rhythm? That's true love. A man and a woman who lie down with their hearts beating together are truly lucky. Then you've truly been in love, m' boy. Yeah, that's

true love. You might see that person once a month, once a year, maybe once a lifetime, but you have the guarantee your lives are going to be in rhythm. That's all you need.

RR: Considering that some of your recent songs have been about love and romance, what do you feel about the tendency some people used to have of dividing your work into periods? Did you ever feel it was fair to divide your work, for example, into a political period and a nonpolitical period?

BD: Those people disregarded the ultimate fact that I am a songwriter. I can't help what other people do with my songs, what they make of them.

RR: But you were more involved politically at one time. You were supposed to have written *Chimes of Freedom* in the back seat of a car while you were visiting some SNCC people in the South.

BD: That is all we did in those days. Writing in the back seats of cars and writing songs on street corners or on porch swings. Seeking out the explosive areas of life.

RR: One of which was politics?

BD: Politics was always one because there were people who were trying to change things. They were involved in the political game because that is how they had to change things. But I have always considered politics just part of the illusion. I don't get involved much in politics. I don't know what the system runs on.

For instance, there are people who have definite ideas or who studied all the systems of government. A lot of those people with college-educational backgrounds tended to come in and use up everybody for whatever purposes they had in mind. And, of course, they used music, because music was accessible and we would have done that stuff and written those songs and sung them whether there was any politics or not. I never did renounce a role in politics, because I never played one in politics. It would be comical for me to think that I played a role. Gurdjieff thinks it's best to work out your mobility daily.

RR: So you did have a lot of "on the road" experiences?

BD: I still do.

RR: Driving around?

BD: I am. interested in all aspects of life. Revelations and realizations. Lucid thought that can be translated into songs, analogies, new information. I am better at it now. Not really written yet anything to make me stop writing. Like, I haven't come to the place that Rimbaud came to when he decided to stop writing and run guns in Africa.

RR: Jimmy Carter has said that listening to your songs, he learned to see in a new way the relationship between landlord and tenant, farmer and sharecropper and things like that. He also said that you were his friend. What do you think of all that?

BD: I am his friend.

RR: A personal friend?

BD: I know him personally.

RR: Do you like him?

BD: Yeah, I think his heart's in the right place.

RR: How would you describe that place?

BD: The place of destiny. You know, I hope the magazine won't take all this stuff and edit—like, Carter's heart's in the right place of destiny, because it's going to really sound—

RR: No, it would lose the sense of conversation. The magazine's pretty good about that.

BD: Carter has his heart in the right place. He has a sense of who he is. That's what I felt, anyway, when I met him.

RR: Have you met him many times?

BD: Only once.

RR: Stayed at his house?

BD: No. But anybody who's a governor or a Senate leader or in a position of authority who finds time to invite a folkrock singer and his band out to his place has got to have... a sense of humor... and a feeling of the pulse of the people. Why does he have to do it?

Most people in those kinds of positions can't relate at all to people in the music field unless it's for some selfish purpose.

RR: Did you talk about music or politics?

BD: Music. Very little politics. The conversation was kept in pretty general areas.

RR: Does he have any favorite Dylan songs?

BD: I didn't ask him if he had any favorite Dylan songs. He didn't say that he did. I think he liked *Ballad of a Thin Man*, really.

RR: Did you think that Carter might have been using you by inviting you there?

BD: No, I believe that he was a decent, untainted man and he just wanted to check me out. Actually, as Presidents go, I liked Truman.

RR: Why?

BD: I just liked the way he acted and things he said and who he said them to. He had a common sense about him, which is rare for a President. Maybe in the old days it wasn't so rare, but nowadays it's rare. He had a common quality. You felt like you could talk to him.

RR: You obviously feel you can talk to President Carter.

BD: You *do* feel like you can talk to him, but the guy is so busy and overworked you feel more like, well, maybe you'd just leave him alone, you know. And he's dealing with such complicated matters and issues that people are a little divided and we weren't divided in Truman's time.

RR: Is there anything you're angry about? Is there anything that would make you go up to Carter and say, "Look, you fucker, do *this!*"?

BD: Right. [Pause] **He's probably caught up in the system like everybody else.**

RR: Including you?

BD: I'm a part of the system. I have to deal with the system. The minute you pay taxes, you're part of the system.

RR: Are there any heroes or saints these days?

BD: A saint is a person who gives of himself totally and freely, without strings. He is neither deaf nor blind. And yet he's both. He's the master of his own reality, the voice of simplicity. The trick is to stay away from mirror images. The only true mirrors are puddles of water.

RR: How are mirrors different from puddles?

BD: The image you see in a puddle of water is consumed by depth: An image you see when you look into a piece of glass has no depth or life-flutter movement. Of course, you might want to check your tie. And, of course, you might want to see if the make-up is on straight. That's all the way. Vanity sells a lot of things.

RR: How so?

BD: Well, products on the market. Everything from new tires to bars of soap. Need is—need is totally overlooked. Nobody seems to care about people's needs. They're all for one purpose. A shallow grave.

RR: Do you want your grave unmarked?

BD: Isn't that a line in my film?

RR: Yes.

BD: Well, there are many things they can do with your bones, you know. [*Pause*] **They make neckpieces out of them, bury them. Burn them up.**

RR: What's your latest preference?

BD: Ah—put them in a nutshell.

RR: You were talking about vanity and real needs. What needs? What are we missing?

BD: There isn't anything missing. There is just a lot of scarcity.

RR: Scarcity of what?

BD: Inspirational abundance.

RR: So it's not an energy crisis but an imagination crisis?

BD: I think it's a spiritual crisis.

RR: How so?

BD: Well, you know, people step on each other's feet too much. They get on each other's case. They rattle easily. But I don't particularly stress that. I'm not on a soapbox about it, you know. That is the way life is.

RR: We asked about heroes and saints and began talking about saints. How about heroes?

BD: A hero is anyone who walks to his own drummer.

RR: Shouldn't people look to other to be heroes?

BD: No; when people look to other for heroism, they're looking for heroism in an imaginary character.

RR: Maybe that in part explains why many seized upon you as that imaginary character.

BD: I'm not an imaginary character, though.

RR: You must realize that people get into a whole thing about you.

BD: I know they used to.

RR: Don't you think they still do?

BD: Well, I m not aware of it anymore.

RR: What about the 1974 tour? Or the Rolling Thunder tour of 1976?

BD: Well, yeah, you know, when I play, people show up. I'm aware they haven't forgotten about me.

RR: Still, people always think you have answers, don't they?

BD: No, listen: If I wasn't Bob Dylan, I'd probably think that Bob Dylan has a lot of answers myself.

RR: Would you be right?

BD: I don't think so. Maybe he'd have a lot of answers for *him*, but for me? Maybe not. Maybe yes, maybe no. Bob Dylan isn't a cat, he doesn't have nine lives, so he can only do what he can do. You know: not break under the strain.

If you need someone who raises someone else to a level that is unrealistic, then it's that other person's problem. He is just confronting his superficial self somewhere down the line. They'll realize it, I'm sure.

RR: But didn't you have to go through a period when people were claiming you had let them down?

BD: Yeah, but I don't pay much attention to that. What can you say? Oh, I let you down, big deal, OK. That's all. Find somebody else, OK? That's all.

RR: You talked about a spiritual crisis. Do you think Christ is an answer?

BD: What is it that attracts people to Christ? The fact that it was such a tragedy, is what. Who does Christ become when he lives inside a certain person? Many people say that Christ lives inside them: Well, what does that mean? I've talked to many people whom Christ lives inside; I haven't met one who would want to trade places with Christ. Not one of his people put himself on the line when it came down to the final hour.

What would Christ be in this day and age if he came back? What would he be? What would he be to fulfill his function and purpose? He would have to be a leader, I suppose.

RR: Did you grow up thinking about the fact that you were Jewish?

BD: No, I didn't. I've never felt Jewish. I don't really consider myself Jewish or non-Jewish. I don't have much of a Jewish background. I'm not a patriot to any creed. I believe in all of them and none of them. A devout Christian or Moslem can be just as effective as a devout Jew.

RR: You say you don't feel Jewish. But what about your sense of God?

BD: I feel a heartfelt God. I don't particularly think that God wants me thinking about Him all the time. I think that would be a tremendous burden on Him, you know. He's got enough people asking Him for favors. He's got enough people asking Him to pull strings. I'll pull my own strings, you know.

I remember seeing a *Time* magazine on an airplane a few years back and it had a big cover headline, "IS GOD DEAD?" I mean, that was—would you think that was a

responsible thing to do? What does God think of that? I mean, if you were God, how would you like to see that written about yourself? You know, I think the country's gone downhill since that day.

RR: Really?

BD: Uh-huh.

RR: Since that particular question was asked?

BD: Yeah; I think at that point, some very irresponsible people got hold of too much power to put such an irrelevant thing like that on a magazine when they could be talking about real issues. Since that day, you've had to kind of make your own way.

RR: How are we doing, making our own way?

BD: The truth is that we're born and we die. We're concerned here in this life with the journey from point A to point Z, or from what we think is point A to point Z. But it's pretty self-deluding if you think that's all there is.

RR: What do you think is beyond Z?

BD: You mean, what do I think is in the great unknown? [*Pause*] **Sounds, echoes of laughter.**

RR: Do you feel there's some sense of karmic balance in the universe, that you suffer for acts of bad faith?

BD: Of course. I. think everybody knows that's true. After you've lived long enough, you realize that's the case. You can get away with anything for a while. But it's like Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* or Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*: Somewhere along the line, sooner or later, you're going to have to pay.

RR: Do you feel you've paid for what you got away with earlier?

BD: Right now, I'm about even.

RR: Isn't that what you said after your motorcycle accident—"Something had to be evened up"?

BD: Yes.

RR: And you meant...?

BD: I meant my back wheel had to be aligned. [*Laughter*]

RR: Let's take one last dip back into the material world. What about an artist's relationship to money?

BD: The myth of the starving artist is a myth. The big bankers and prominent young ladies who buy art started it. They just want to keep the artist under their thumb. Who says an artist can't have any money? Look at Picasso. The starving artist is usually starving for those around him to starve. You don't have to starve to be a good artist. You just have to have love, insight and a strong point of view. And you have to fight off depravity. Uncompromising, that's what makes a good artist. It doesn't matter if he has money or not. Look at Matisse; he was a banker. Anyway, there are other things that constitute wealth and poverty besides money.

RR: What we were touching on was the subject of the expensive house you live in, for example.

BD: What about it? Nothing earthshaking or final about where I live. There is no vision behind the house. It is just a bunch of trees and sheds.

RR: We read in the papers about an enormous copper dome you had built.

BD: I don't know what you read in the papers. It's just a place to live for now. The copper dome is just so I can recognize it when I come home.

RR: OK, back to less worldly concerns. You don't believe in astrology, do you?

BD: I don't think so.

RR: You were quoted recently as having said something about having a Gemini nature.

BD: Well, maybe there are certain characteristics of people who are born under certain signs. But I don't know, I'm not sure how relevant it is.

RR: Could it be there's an undiscovered twin or a double to Bob Dylan?

BD: Someplace on the planet, there's a double of me walking around. Could very possibly be.

RR: Any messages for your double?
BD: Love will conquer everything—I suppose.

December 1977
Jonathan Cott Interview, Los Angeles, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 647-661.

This interview was conducted during early December 1977 by Jonathan Cott (JC), a staff-writer for *Rolling Stone*. It centers on *Renaldo & Clara* and is one of numerous interviews given around this time to publicise the film. Cott treats his subject seriously and, accordingly, this is an in-depth interview in line with Cott's own views on interview technique:

> They say, 'The questions get too scholarly, or overly serious.' I say: Maybe they're right. I just like to treat people I admire in a serious way – but playfully, too. To talk with rock artists with the same seriousness with which I'd talk to William Butler Yeats, were he alive. The idea is to get away from the 'What's-your-favorite-color?' and 'What-kind-of-girls-do-you-like?' questions.

This is one of two interviews given to Cott by Dylan this year; the second, focused on his then latest album *Street Legal*.

JC: If someone asked me what *Renaldo and Clara* was about, I'd say: art and life, identity and God – with lots of encounters at bars, restaurants, luncheonettes, cabarets and bus stations.

BD: Do you want to see it again? Would it be helpful for you to see it again?

JC: You think I'm too confused about the film?

BD: No, I don't think so at all. It isn't just about bus stations and cabarets and stage music and identity – those are elements of it. But it is mostly about identity – about everybody's identity. More important, its about Renaldo's identity, so we superimpose our own vision on Renaldo: it's his vision and it's his dream. You know what the film is about? It begins with music – you see a guy in a mask [Bob Dylan]**, you can see through the mask he's wearing, and he's singing *When I Paint My Masterpiece*. So right away you know there's an involvement with music. Music is confronting you.**

JC: So are lines like: "You can almost think that you're seein' double."

BD: Right. Also on a lyrical level. But you still don't really know... and then you're getting off that, and there seems to be a tour. You're hearing things and seeing people... its not quite like a tour, but there's some kind of energy like being on a tour. There's a struggle, there's a reporter – who later appears in the restaurant scenes.

All right, then it goes right to David Blue, who's playing pinball and who seems to be the narrator. He's Renaldo's narrator, he's Renaldo's scribe – he belongs to Renaldo.

JC: Yet David Blue talks not about Renaldo but about Bob Dylan and how he, David Blue, first met Dylan in Greenwich Village in the late fifties.

BD: They seem to be the same person after a while. It's something you can only feel but never really know. Any more than you can know whether Willie Sutton pulled all those bank jobs. Any more than you can know who killed Kennedy for sure. And right away, David Blue says: "Well, what happened was that when I first left my parent's house, I bought *The Myth Of Sisyphus*." Now, that wasn't really the book, but it was pretty close.

It was actually – so he tells us – *Existentialism And Human Emotions*. So that's it: this film is a postexistentialist movie. We're in the postexistentialist period. What is it? That's what it is.

JC: What could be more existentialist than playing pinball? It's the perfect existentialist game.

BD: It is. I've seen rows and rows of pinball players lined up like ducks. Its a great equalizer.

JC: What about the emotions in *Existentialism And Human Emotions*?

BD: Human emotions are the great dictator – in this movie as in all movies... I'll tell you what I think of the emotions later. But getting back to David Blue: he's left his home, and right away you're in for something like a triple dimension. Just ten minutes into the movie he says: "I got in the bus, I went down to New York, walked around for four hours, got back on the bus and went home." And that is exactly what a lot of people are going to feel when they walk into the movie theater: they got on the bus, walked around for four hours and walked home.

JC: There's another guy later in the film, who walks out into the night and says to a girl: "This has been a great mistake."

BD: Yeah. You can pick any line in a movie to sum up your feeling about it. But don't forget you don't see that guy anymore after that... He's gone. And that means Renaldo isn't being watched anymore because he was watching Renaldo.

JC: Talking about mistakes and seeing double: it's fascinating how easy it is to mistake people in the film for one another. I mistook you, for instance, for the guy driving the carriage (maybe it wasn't you); for Jack Elliott; and I even mistook you for you.

BD: The Masked Tortilla [Bob Neuwirth] **is mistaken for Bob Dylan, Bob Dylan is mistaken for Renaldo. And... Bob Dylan is the one with the hat on. That's who Bob Dylan is – he's the one with the hat on.**

JC: Almost every man in the film has a hat on.

BD: Right.

JC: All those disguises and masks!

BD: The first mask, as I said, is one you can see through. But they're all masks. In the film, the mask is more important than the face.

JC: All the women in the film seem to turn into one person, too, and a lot of them wear hats. It reminds me of *The Ballad Of Frankie Lee And Judas Priest*:

He just stood there staring
At that big house as bright as any sun,
With four and twenty windows
And a woman's face in ev'ry one.

BD: This film was made for you. [laughing] **Did you see the Woman in White who becomes a different Woman in White? One's mistaken for the other. At first she's only an idea of herself – you see her in the street, later in the carriage... I think the women in the movie are beautiful. They look like they've stepped out of a painting. They're vulnerable, but they're also strong-willed.**

JC: "Breaking just like a little girl."

BD: That's the child in everyone. That's the child in everyone that has to be confronted.

JC: *Just Like A Woman* always seemed to me to be somehow about being born: "I can't stay in here, I just can't fit". So by confronting the child in you, saying goodbye to childhood, you're being born into something bigger... In a way it's a frightening song.

BD: It always was a frightening song, but that feeling needs to be eliminated.

JC: I was thinking of what looked like a Yiddish cabaret filled with older women listening intently to Allen Ginsberg reading passages from *Kaddish*, his great elegy to his mother.

BD: Those women are strong in the sense that they know their own identity. It's only the layer of what we're going to reveal in the next film, because women are exploited like anyone else. They're victims just like coal miners.

JC: The poet Robert Bly has written about the image of the Great mother as a union of four force fields, consisting of the nurturing mother, like Isis (though your *Isis* seems more ambiguous); the Death Mother (like the woman in *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue*); the Ecstatic Mother (like the girl in *Spanish Harlem Incident*); and the Stone Mother who drives you mad (like Sweet Melinda who loves you howling at the moon in *Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues*). Traces of these women seem to be in this film as well.

BD: The Death Mother is represented in the film, but I don't know what I should say or can say or shouldn't say about who is who in the movie. I mean who is the old woman everyone calls Mamma – the mamma who sings, plays the guitar reads palms? She reads Allen's palm, saying: "You've been married twice." And me, later on I'm looking at the gravestone marked HUSBAND.
Ginsberg asks: "Is that going to happen to you?" And I say: "I want an unmarked grave." But of course I'm saying this as Renaldo.

JC: In *Tarantula* you wrote your own epitaph;

> Here lies bob dylan
> killed by a discarded Oedipus
> who turned around
> to investigate a ghost and discovered that
> the ghost too was more than one person.

BD: Yeah, way back then I was thinking of this film. I've had this picture in mind for a long time – years and years. Too many years... Renaldo is oppressed. He's oppressed because he's born. We don't really know who Renaldo is. We just know what he isn't. He isn't the Masked Tortilla. Renaldo is the one with the hat, but he's not wearing a hat. I'll tell you what this movie is: it's like life exactly, but not an imitation of it. It transcends life, and it's not like life.

JC: That paradox is toppling me over.

BD: I'll tell you what my film is about: its about naked alienation of the inner self against the outer self-alienation taken to the extreme. And it's about integrity. My next film is about obsession. The hero is an arsonist... but he's not really a hero.

JC: *Renaldo and Clara* seems to me to be about obsession too.

BD: That's true but only in the way it applies to integrity.

JC: The idea of integrity comes across in a lot of your songs and in lines like: "To live outside the law, you must be honest" and "She doesn't have to say she's faithful, / Yet she's true, like ice, like fire."

BD: We talked about emotions before. You can't be a slave to your emotions. If you're a slave to your emotions you're dependent on your emotions, and you're only dealing with your conscious mind. But the film is about the fact that you have to be faithful to your subconscious, unconscious superconscious – as well as to your conscious. Integrity is a facet of honesty. It has to do with knowing yourself.

JC: At the end of the film, Renaldo is with two women in a room (The Woman in White played by Joan Baez and Clara played by Sara Dylan), and he says: "Evasiveness is only in the mind – truth is on many levels... Ask me anything and I'll tell you the truth." Clara and the Woman in White both ask him: "Do you love her?" as they point to each other – not: "Do you love me?"

BD: Possessiveness. It was a self-focused kind of question. And earlier one of the women in the whorehouse talks about the ego-protection cords she wears around her neck. Do you remember that?... In the scene you mentioned, did you notice that Renaldo was looking at the newspaper which had an article on Bob Dylan and Joan Baez in it? Joan Baez and Bob Dylan at this point are an illusion. It wasn't planned that way. Joan Baez without Bob Dylan isn't too much of an illusion because she's an independent woman and her independence asserts itself. But Joan Baez with Bob Dylan is.

JC: So at the moment you open up that newspaper, art and life really come together.

BD: Exactly.

JC: And what about the moment when Joan Baez, looking at Clara, says: "Who is this woman?" and you cut to your singing *Sara*? Talk about art and life.

BD: It's as far as you can take it – meaning personally and generally. Who is this woman? Obviously, this woman is a figment of the material world. Who is this woman who has

no name? Who is this woman, she says... who is this woman, as if she's talking about herself. Who this woman is, is told to you, earlier on, when you see her coming out of the church carrying a rope. You know she means business, you know she has a purpose. Another way of putting it is: the singer's character onstage is always becoming Renaldo. By singing *Sara*, the singer comes as close to Renaldo as he can get. It brings everything as close as possible without two becoming one.

JC: It was pretty amazing to see you use your personal life so nakedly in that scene with Renaldo and the two women.

BD: Right, but you're talking to me as a director now.

JC: Still, you do have that scene with Joan Baez and Sara Dylan.

BD: Well, Sara Dylan here is working as Sara Dylan. She has the same last name as Bob Dylan, but we may not be related. If she couldn't have played the role of Clara, she wouldn't have done it.

JC: Is she talking about her real problems or pretending that she's an adventurer?

BD: We can make anybody's problems our problems.

JC: Some people will obviously think that this film either broke up your marriage or is a kind of incantation to make your marriage come back together.

BD: Either one of those statements I can't relate to. It has nothing to do with the breakup of my marriage. My marriage is over. I'm divorced. This film is a film.

JC: Why did you make yourself so vulnerable?

BD: You must be vulnerable to be sensitive to reality. And to me being vulnerable is just another way of saying that one has nothing more to lose. I don't have anything but darkness to lose. I'm way beyond that. The worst thing that could happen is that the film will be accepted and that the next one will be compared unfavorably to this one.

JC: Strangely, the scene where the two women confront Renaldo reminds me of *King Lear* in which each of the daughters has to say how much she loves her father.

BD: You're right. Renaldo sees himself as Cordelia.

JC: I've always interpreted some of the *Basement Tapes* as being concerned with ideas from *King Lear*: "Too much of nothing / Can make a man abuse a king"; "Oh what dear daughter 'neath the sun / Would treat a father so, / To wait upon him hand and foot / and always tell him 'No'?"

BD: Exactly. In the later years it changed from "king" to "clown."

JC: *King Lear* had a fool around him, too, and when the fool leaves, Cordelia comes back. She takes his place and he takes hers.

BD: The roles are all interchangeable.

JC: As in *Tangled Up In Blue* and as in your movie.

BD: Yes it is.

JC: Were you specifically influenced by *King Lear* when you wrote songs like *Tears Of Rage*?

BD: No. Songs like that were based on the concept that one is one.

JC: "...and all alone and ever more shall be so."

BD: Exactly. What comes is gone forever every time.

JC: But one is difficult to deal with, so Christians gave us the Trinity.

BD: The Christians didn't bring in anything – it was the Greeks.

JC: Jesus is a very strong figure in *Renaldo and Clara*, I noticed. There's that song by you called *What Will You Do When Jesus Comes*? There's the woman who says to you in the restaurant: "There's nowhere to go. Just stand and place yourself like the cross and I'll receive you." And then there are the shots of the huge cement crucifix in the Catholic grotto.

BD: Right. Jesus is the most identifiable figure in Western culture, and yet he was exploited, used and exploited. We all have been.

JC: There's also that scene, near the end of the film, where Allen Ginsberg takes you around to see Jesus killed for the second time and then buried under the weight of the cross. On one level, the film is about the Stations of the Cross, isn't it?

BD: Yeah, you're right. Like the double vision having to be killed twice. Like why does Jesus really die?

JC: Spiritually or politically?

BD: Realistically... Because he's a healer. Jesus is a healer. So he goes to India, finds out how to be a healer and becomes one. But see. I believe that he overstepped his duties a little bit. He accepted and took on the bad karma of all the people he healed. And he was filled with so much bad karma that the only way out was to burn him up. In my film we're looking at masks a lot of the time. And then when the dream becomes so solidified that it has to be taken to the stage of reality, then you'll see stone you'll see a statue which is even a further extension of the mask: the statue of Mary in front of the statue of Jesus on the cross in the Crucifix Grotto.

JC: Throughout the film, I also noticed the continual reappearance of the red rose. Every woman has a rose.

BD: It has a great deal to do with what's happening in the movie. Do you remember the woman in the carriage? She's bringing a rose to Renaldo who gives it back to her.

JC: But then it appears in your hat when you're singing.

BD: By that time it's all fallen apart and shattered the dream is gone — it could be anywhere after that.

JC: Joan Baez carries one when she's with Mamma. And then the violinist Scarlet Rivera gives it to you in your dressing room.

BD: That's right. The rose is a symbol of fertility.

JC: Also of the soul. 'The Romance of the Rose' – the dreamer's vision of the soul.

BD: That's right... The most mysterious figure in the film is the conductor on the train. Do you remember him?

JC: He's the guy who tells the Masked Tortilla – who says he's going to a wedding – that he's only been on the train for four hours (there's that magical four hours again!) and not for the six days that he imagines.

BD: Yeah he tells him too, that he's going to possibly the largest city in the East.

JC: I figured it was New York.

BD: No. The largest city in the East!

JC: The Magi!

BD: That's not exactly what he's talking about – it's more like the holy crossroads.

JC: There's another scene like that in which Mick Ronson is blocking Ronnie Hawkins' way to a backstage area. He seemed like some kind of guardian.

BD: He's the Guardian of the Gates. But scenes like these work in terms of feeling. It's like with Tarot cards – you don't have to be confused as to what they mean... someone else who knows can read them for you.

JC: "Nothing is revealed," you sing at the end of *The Ballad Of Frankie Lee And Judas Priest*. Is anything revealed at the end of *Renaldo and Clara*?

BD: Yeah. I'll tell you what the film reveals: this film reveals that there's a whole lot to reveal beneath the surface of the soul, but it's unthinkable.

(Silence)

BD: That's exactly what it reveals. It reveals the depths that there are to reveal. And that's the most you can ask because things are really very invisible. You can't reveal the invisible. And this film goes as far as we can to reveal that.

JC: Under a statue of Isis in the city of Sais is the following inscription: "I am everything that was, that is, that shall be... Nor has any mortal ever been able to discover what lies under my veil."

BD: That's a fantastic quotation. That's true exactly. Once you see what's under the veil, what happens to you? You die, don't you or go blind?

JC: I wanted to tie in two things we've talked about: the idea of integrity and the idea of Jesus. In your song *I Want You*, you have the lines:

Now all my fathers, they've gone down,
True love they've been without it.
But all their daughters put me down
'Cause I don't think about it.

These are some of my favorite lines of yours, and to me they suggest that real desire is stronger than frustration or guilt.

BD: I know. It's incredible you find that there. I know it's true. And in *Renaldo and Clara* there's no guilt. But that's why people will take offense at it, if they are offended by it in any way because of the lack of guilt in the movie. None at all.

JC: This brings us back to Jesus.

BD: Jesus is... well I'm not using Jesus in the film so much as I'm using the concept of Jesus – the idea of Jesus as a man, not the virgin birth.

JC: But what about the concept of masochism associated with Jesus?

BD: That's what happened to Jesus. People relate to the masochism, to the spikes in his hand, to the blood coming out, to the fact that he was crucified. What would have happened to him if he hadn't been crucified? That's what draws people to him. There are only signals of that in this film – like a finger-nail blade at one point.

JC: What about the line in *Wedding Song*: "Your love cuts like a knife."

BD: Well it's bloodletting, it's what heals all disease. Neither aggression nor anger interests me. Violence only does on an interpretive level only when it's a product of reason.

People are attracted to blood. I'm personally not consumed by the desire to drink the blood. But bloodletting is meaningful in that it can cure disease. But we didn't try to make a film of that nature. This film concerns itself with that dream. There's no blood in the dream, the dream is cold. This film concerns itself only with the depth of the dream – the dream as seen in the mirror.

The next film might have some blood... I'm trying to locate Lois Smith to be in it. She would represent the idea of innocence. Do you know who she is? She was the barmaid in *East of Eden*. I 'm trying to line up some people for the film, and I can't find her... For some reason I've just thought of my favorite singer.

JC: Who is that?

BD: Om Kalsoum – the Egyptian woman who died a few years ago. She was my favorite.

JC: What did you like about her?

BD: It was her heart.

JC: Do you like dervish and Sufi singing, by the way?

BD: Yeah, that's where my singing really comes from... except that I sing in America. I've heard too much Leadbelly really to be too much influenced by the whirling dervishes.

JC: Now that we somehow got onto this subject, who else do you like right now? New Wave groups?

BD: No, I'm not interested in them. I think Alice Cooper is an overlooked songwriter. I like Ry Cooder. And I like Dave Mason's version of something which is on the jukebox right now.

JC: I wonder what you think of the guy who ends your movie singing this fulsome, crooning version of *In The Morning* with those memorable lines: "I'll be yawning into the morning of my life". Why is he there?

BD: The film had to end with him because he represents the fact that Renaldo could be dreaming! And he might be singing for Renaldo – representing him, the darkness representing the light.

JC: He's like what's happened to one sentimental part of rock & roll in the Seventies.

BD: He's not rock & roll...

JC: Rock & roll isn't rock & roll anymore.

BD: You're right, there's no more rock & roll. It's an imitation, we can forget about that. Rock & roll has turned itself inside out. I never did do rock & roll, I'm just doing the same old thing I've always done.

JC: You've never sung a rock & roll song?

BD: No, I never have, only in spirit.

JC: You can't really dance to one of your songs.

BD: I couldn't.

JC: Imagine dancing to *Rainy Day Woman #12 & 35*. It's kind of alienating. Everyone thought it was about being stoned, but I always thought it was about being all alone.

BD: So did I. You could write about that for years... Rock & roll ended with Phil Spector. The Beatles weren't rock & roll either. Nor the Rolling Stones. Rock & roll ended with Little Anthony and the Imperials. Pure rock & roll.

JC: With *Goin' Out Of My Head*?

BD: The one before that... Rock & roll ended in 1959.

JC: When did it begin for you?

BD: 1954.

JC: What is there now?

BD: Programmed music. Quadruple tracking.

JC: What do you think about the Seventies?

BD: The Seventies I see as a period of reconstruction after the Sixties, that's all. That's why people say: well, it's boring, nothing's really happening, and that's because wounds are healing. By the Eighties anyone who's going to be doing anything will have his or her cards showing. You won't be able to get back in the game in the Eighties.

JC: I came across something you wrote a while back:

> Desire... never fearful
> Finally faithful
> It will guide me well
> across all bridges
> inside all tunnels
> never fallin'.

BD: I even remember where I wrote that. I wrote that in New Hampshire. I think I was all alone.

JC: Here's something else you wrote:

> Mine shall be a strong loneliness
> dissolvin' deep
> t' the depths of my freedom
> an' that, then shall
> remain my song.

You seemed to have stayed true to that feeling.

BD: I haven't had any reason to stray.

JC: In *The Times They Are A-Changin'* you sing: "He that gets hurt / Will be he who has stalled," What has kept you unstalled?

BD: I don't know. Mainly because I don't believe in this life.

JC: The Buddhist tradition talks about illusion, the Jewish tradition about allusion. Which do you feel closer to?

BD: I believe in both but I probably lean to allusion. I'm not a Buddhist. I believe in life but not this life.

JC: What life do you believe in?

BD: Real life.

JC: Do you ever experience real life?

BD: I experience it all the time, it's beyond this life.

JC: I wanted to read you two Hassidic texts that somehow remind me of your work. The first says that in the service of God, one can learn three things from a child and seven from a thief. "From a child you can learn (1) always to be happy; (2) never to sit idle, and (3) to cry for everything one wants. From a thief you should learn: (1) to work at night; (2) if one cannot gain what one wants in one night to try again the next night; (3) to love one's co-workers just as thieves love each other; (4) to be willing to risk one's life even for a little thing; (5) not to attach too much value to things even though one has risked one's life for them – just as a thief will resell a stolen article for a fraction of it's real value; (6) to withstand all kinds of beatings and tortures but to remain what you are; and (7) to believe that your work is worthwhile and not be willing to change it".

BD: Who wrote that?

JC: A Hassidic rabbi.

BD: Which one?

JC: Dov Baer, the Mazid of Mezeritch.

BD: That's the most mind-blazing chronicle of human behavior I think I've ever heard... How can I get a copy of that.

JC: I brought it for you actually. I photocopied it from a book called *The Wisdom of the Jewish Mystics*.

BD: I'll put it on my wall. There's a man I would follow. That's a real hero. A real hero.

JC: Another Hasidic rabbi once said that you can learn something from everything. Even from a train, a telephone and a telegram. From a train, he said, you can learn that in one second one can miss everything. From a telephone you can learn that what you say over here can be heard over there. And from a telegram that all words are counted and charged.

BD: It's a cosmic statement. Where do you get all of these rabbis' sayings? Those guys are really wise. I tell you, I've heard gurus and yogis and philosophers and politicians and doctors and lawyers, teachers of all kinds... and these rabbis really had something going.

JC: They're like Sufis, but they speak and teach with more emotion.

BD: As I said before, I don't believe in emotion. They use their hearts, their hearts don't use them.

JC: In one second missing everything on a train... do you think that means you can miss the train or miss seeing something from the train window?

BD: That's a statement of revelation. I think it means that in one moment you can miss everything because you're not there. You just watch it, and you know you're missing it.

JC: What about the telephone – what you say here is heard over there.

BD: That means you're never that far away from the ultimate God.

JC: And words being counted and charged.

BD: That's very truthful, too. That's every thing you say and think is all being added up.

JC: How are you coming out?

BD: You know, I'll tell you: lately I've been catching myself. I've been in some scenes, and I say: "Holy shit, I'm not here alone." I've never had that experience before the past few months. I've felt this strange, eerie feeling that I wasn't all alone, and I'd better know it.

JC: Do you watch what you say?

BD: I always try to watch what I say because I try not to say anything I don't mean.

JC: Maybe Renaldo has that problem at the end of your movie?

BD: No, Renaldo's on top of it, he's on top of circumstance. He's not going to say too much 'cause he knows he doesn't know much. Now me, obviously I'm talking and saying things, and I will talk and say things, but that's because I think I'm going to mean them... or I feel I mean them now. I'm not just talking to hear myself. But Renaldo is not saying anything just because he knows that what he says is being heard and that therefore he doesn't know what to say. No, he says some very incredible and important

things when he's confronted with his allusion. You know, he does say: "Do I love you like I love her? No." "Do I love her like I love you? No". He can't say any more that... you don't have to know any more about him than that. That's all you have to know about him, that's all you have to know about Bob Dylan.

JC: At that moment in the film, you cut into a performance of your song *Catfish* – "Nobody can throw the ball like Catfish can." It's almost jokey after that intense preceeding scene.

BD: Its treated more in the way of music, getting back to the idea that music is truthful. And music is truthful. Everything's okay, you put on a record, someone's playing an instrument – that changes the vibe. Music attracts the angels in the universe. A group of angels sitting at a table are going to be attracted by that.

So we always get back to the music in the film. We made a point of doing it, as if we had to do it. You're not going to see music in the movies as you do in this film. We don't have any filler. You don't see any doors close or any reverse shots which are just there to take up time until you get to the next one. We didn't want to take time away from other shots.

A lot of hold shots, not enough of them. When the woman is walking down the street with that rope, that's a hold shot. David Blue is on a hold shot for six minutes the first time you see him.

I know this film is too long. It may four hours too long – I don't care. To me, it's not long enough. I'm not concerned how long something is. I want to see a set shot. I feel a set shot. I don't feel all this motion and boom-boom. We can fast cut when we want, but the power comes in the ability to have faith that it is a meaningful shot. You know who understood this? Andy Warhol. Warhol did a lot for 'American cinema. He was before his time. But Warhol and Hitchcock and Peckinpah and Tod Browning... they were important to me. I figure Godard had the accessibility to make what he made, he broke new ground. I never saw any film like Breathless, but once you saw it you said: "Yeah, man, why didn't I do that, I could have done that." Okay, he did it but he couldn't have done it in America.

JC: But what about a film like Sam Fuller's *Forty Guns* or Joseph Lewis' *Gun Crazy*?

BD: Yeah, I just heard Fuller's name the other day. I think American filmmakers are the best. But I also like Kurosawa, and my favorite director is Buñuel; it doesn't surprise me that he'd say those amazing things you quoted to me before from the *New Yorker*. I don't know what to tell you. In one way I don't consider myself a filmmaker at all. In another way I do. To me, *Renaldo and Clara* is my first real film. I don't know who will like it. I made it for a specific bunch of people and myself, and that's all. That's how I wrote *Blowin' in the Wind* and *The Times They Are A-Changin'* – they were written for a certain crowd of people and for certain artists, too. Who knew they were going to be big songs?

JC: The film, in a way, is a culmination of a lot of your ideas and obsessions

BD: That may be true, but I hope it also has meaning for other people who aren't that familiar with my songs, and that other people can see themselves in it, because I don't feel so isolated from what's going on. There are a lot of people who'll look at the film without knowing who anybody is in it. And they'll see it more purely.

JC: Eisenstein talked of montage in terms of attraction – shots attracting other shots – then in terms of shock, and finally in terms of fusion or synthesis, and of overtones. You seem to be really aware of the overtones in your film, do you know what I mean?

BD: I sure do.

JC: Eisenstein once wrote: "The Moscow art is my deadly enemy. It is the exact antithesis of all I'm trying to do. They string their emotions together to give a continuous illusion of reality. I take photographs of reality and then cut them up so as to produce emotions."

BD: What we did was to cut up reality and make it more real... Everyone from the cameramen to the water boy, from the wardrobe people to the sound people was just as important as anyone else in the making of the film. There weren't any roles that well

defined. The money was coming in the front door and going out the back door: the Rolling Thunder tour sponsored the movie. And I had faith and trust in the people who helped me do the film, and they had faith and trust in me.

JC: In the movie, there's a man behind a luncheonette counter who talks a lot about truth – he's almost like the Greek chorus of the film.

BD: Yeah, we often sat around and talked about that guy. He is the chorus.

JC: That guy at one point talks about the Movement going astray and how everyone got bought off. How come you didn't sell out and just made a commercial film?

BD: I don't have any cinematic vision to sell out. It's all for me so I can't sell out. I'm not working for anybody. What was there to sell out?

JC: Well, movies like *Welcome To L.A.* and *Looking for Mr. Godbar* are moralistic exploitation films – and many people nowadays think that they're significant statements. You could have sold out to the vision of the times.

BD: Right. I have my point of view and my vision, and nothing tampers with it because it's all that I've got. I don't have anything to sell out.

JC: *Renaldo and Clara* has certain similarities to the recent films of Jacques Rivette. Do you know his work?

BD: I don't. But I wish they'd do it in this country. I'd feel a lot safer. I mean I wouldn't get so much resistance and hostility. I can't believe that people think that four hours is too long for a film. As if people had so much to do. You can see an hour movie that seems like ten hours. I think the vision is strong enough to cut through all of that. But we may be kicked right out of Hollywood after this film is released and have to go to Bolivia. In India, they show twelve-hour movies. Americans are spoiled, they expect art to be like wallpaper with no effort, just to be there.

JC: I should have asked you this before, but how much of the film is improvised and how much determined beforehand?

BD: About a third is improvised, about a third is determined, and about a third is blind luck.

JC: What about, for instance, the scene in which Ronnie Hawkins tries to get a farm girl to go on tour with him, trying to convince her by saying something like: "God's not just in the country, God's in the city, too... God's everywhere, so let's seize the day."

BD: In that scene, Ronnie was given five subjects to hit on. He could say anything he wanted as long as he covered five points. Obviously, God was a subject relevant to the movie. Then he talked about the Father: Now get this: in the film there's the character of the Father played by Allen Ginsberg. But in Ronnie's scene, the farmer's daughter talks about her father. That's the same father.

Another half-improvised scene is the one in which Ramone – the dead lover of Mrs. Dylan [played by Ronee Blakley] **– appears as a ghost in the bathroom, and they argue in front of the mirror.**

JC: How does the audience know that that's Mrs Dylan?

BD: She's so identified later on in the film. Its just like Hitchcock. Hitchcock would lay something down, and an hour later you'd figure it out – but if you want to know, you wait and find out. It's not given to you on a platter.

JC: Hitchcock puts himself into each of his films – once. You put yourself in hundreds of places and times!

BD: Right [Laughing]. **I've tried to learn a lack of fear from Hitchcock.**

JC: Did the John Cassavetes movies influence you at all in scenes such as the one in the bathroom?

BD: No. not at all. But I think it all comes from the same place. I'm probably interested in the same things Cassavetes is interested in.

JC: What are those?

BD: Timing, for example, and the struggle to break down complexity into simplicity.

JC: Timing of relationships?

BD: The relationships of human reason. Its all a matter of timing. The movie creates and holds the time. That's what it should do – it should hold that time, breathe in that time and stop time in doing that. It's like if you look at a painting by Cezanne, you get lost in that painting for that period of time. And you breathe – yet time is going by and you wouldn't know it, you're spell-bound.

JC: In Cezanne, things that you might take as being decoration actually turn out to be substantial.

BD: That's exactly what happens in *Renaldo and Clara*. Things which appear merely decorative usually, later on, become substantial. It just takes a certain amount of experience with the film to catch on to that. For example. Allen Ginsberg. You first hear his name, just his name...

JC: And then you get a glimpse of him at that weird, monomaniacal poetry reading...

BD: It's not as weird as it should be. Weirdness is exactness.

JC: One quick question about Hurricane Carter, whom you show in the film. Do you think that he was guilty?

BD: I don't personally think he is. I put that sequence in the film because he's a man who's not unlike anyone else in the film. He's a righteous man, a very philosophic man – he's not your typical bank robber or mercy slayer. He deserves better than what he got.

JC: You told me that you plan to make twelve more films, but I gather you're not giving up on songwriting and touring.

BD: I have to get back to playing music because unless I do I don't really feel alive. I don't feel I can be a filmmaker all the time. I have to play in front of the people in order just to keep going.

JC: In *Wedding Song* you sing: "I love you more than ever / Now that the past is gone." But in *Tangled Up In Blue* you sing: "But all the while I was alone / The past was close behind." Between these two couplets lies an important boundary.

BD: We allow our past to exist. Our credibility is based on our past. But deep in our soul we have no past. I don't think we have a past anymore than we have a name. You can say we have a past if we have a future. Do we have a future? No. So how can our past exist if the future doesn't exist?

JC: So what are the songs on *Blood On The Tracks* about?

BD: The present.

JC: Why did you say: "I love you more than ever / Now that the past is gone"?

BD: That's delusion. That's gone.

JC: And what about: "And all the while I was alone / The past was close behind"?

BD: That's more delusion. Delusion is close behind.

JC: When your "Greek Chorus" restaurant owner talks about the Movement selling itself out, you next cue to your singing *Tangled Up In Blue* which is, in part, about what has happened in and to the past.

BD: But we're only dealing with the past in terms of being able to be healed by it. We can communicate only because we both agree that this is a glass and this is a bowl and that's a candle and there's a window here and there are lights out in the city. Now I might not agree with that. Turn this glass around and it's something else. Now I'm hiding it in a napkin. Watch it now. Now you don't even know it's there. It's the past... I don't even deal with it. I don't think seriously about the past, the present or the future. I've spent enough time thinking about these things and have gotten nowhere.

JC: But didn't you when you wrote *Blood On The Tracks*? Why is it so intense?

BD: Because there's physical blood in the soul, and flesh and blood are portraying it to you. Will power. Will power is what makes it an intense album... but certainly not anything to do with the past or the future. Will power is telling you that we are agreeing on what is what.

JC: What about *Idiot Wind*?

BD: Will power.

JC: Why have you been able to keep so in touch with your anger throughout the years, as revealed in songs like *Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window?* and *Positively 4th Street*?

BD: Will power. With strength of will you can do anything. With will power you can determine your destiny.

JC: Can you really know where your destiny is leading you?

BD: Yeah when you're on top of your game... Anger and sentimentality go right next to each other and they're both superficial. Chagall made a lot of sentimental paintings. And Voltaire wrote a lot of angry books.

JC: What is *Idiot Wind*?

BD: It's a little bit of both because it uses all the textures of strict philosophy, but basically it's a shattered philosophy that doesn't have a title and it's driven across with will power. Will power is what you're responding to.

JC: In your film you show a bearded poet in Hasidic garb who speaks in an Irish brogue and carries a gun. He tells us that he doesn't care about being fast but about being accurate. Is that how you feel now?

BD: Yeah. Everyone admires the poet, no matter if he's a lumberjack or a football player or a car thief. If he's a poet he'll be admired and respected.

JC: You used to say you were a trapeze artist.

BD: Well I see the poet in every man and woman.

JC: Rimbaud's grave doesn't even mention the fact that he was a poet, but rather that he was an adventurer.

BD: Exactly But I don't try to adopt or imitate Rimbaud in my work. I'm not interested in imitation.

JC: I've always associated you with Rimbaud. Illuminations and Fireworks. Do you believe in reincarnation?

BD: I believe in this – if you want to take reincarnation as a subject: let's say a child is conceived inside of a woman's belly and was planted there by a man. Nine months before that seed is planted there's nothing. Ten, twelve, thirteen months... two years before that seed is planted, maybe there's the germination of that seed. That comes from food intake into the bloodstream. Food can be a side of beer or a carrot on a shelf. But that's what makes it happen.

In another lifetime – you're in a supermarket and there's a package of carrots right there... that possibly could be you. That kind of reincarnation... And how did that carrot get there? It got there through the ground. It grew through the ground with the help of a piece of animal shit. It has to do with the creation and destruction of time. Which means it's immense. Five million years is nothing – it's a drop in a bucket. I don't think there's enough time for reincarnation. It would take thousands or millions of years and light miles for any real kind of reincarnation. I think one can be conscious of different vibrations in the universe and these can be picked up. But reincarnation from the twelfth to the twentieth century – I say it's impossible.

JC: So you take reincarnation on a cellular level, and when I say "Rimbaud and you", you take it as an infinity.

BD: Maybe my spirit passed through the same places as his did. We're all wind and dust anyway and we could have passed through many barriers at different times.

JC: What about your line: "Sweet Goddess / Born of a blinding light and a changing wind" in the song *Tough Mama*?

BD: That's the mother and father, the yin and yang. That's the coming together of destiny and the fulfillment of destiny.

JC: George Harrison once said that your lines:

Look out kid.
It's something you did
God knows when

But you're doin' it again

from *Subterranean Homesick Blues*, seemed to be a wonderful description of karma.

BD: Karma's not reincarnation. There's no proof of reincarnation and there's no proof of karma but there's a feeling of karma. We don't even have any proof that the universe exists. We don't have any proof that we are even sitting here. We can't prove that we're really alive. How can we prove we're alive by other people saying we're alive?

JC: All I have to do is kick a rock.

BD: Yeah, you're saying you're alive but the rock isn't going to tell you. The rock don't feel it.

JC: If you take reality to be unreal, then you make unreality real. What's real to you? Art?

BD: Art is the perpetual motion of illusion. The highest purpose of art is to inspire. What else can you do? What else can you do for anyone but inspire them?

JC: What are your new songs like?

BD: My new songs are new for me and they accomplish what I wanted to accomplish when I started thinking about them. Very seldom do you finish something and then abandon it and very seldom do you abandon something with the attitude that you've gotten what you started out to get. Usually you think, well, it's too big, you get wasted along the way someplace, and then it just trails off... and what you've got is what you've got and you just do the best with it. But very seldom do you ever come out with what you put in. And I think I've done that now for the first time since I was writing two songs a day way back when. My experience with film helped me in writing the songs. I probably wouldn't have written any more songs if I hadn't made this film. I would have been bummed out, I wouldn't have been able to do what I knew could be done.

JC: I know I'm being nostalgic, but I loved hearing you sing *Little Moses* in *Renaldo and Clara*.

BD: I used to play that song when I performed at Gerde's Folk City. It's an old Carter Family song, and it goes something like:

Away by the waters so wide
The ladies were winding their way,
When Pharoah's little daughter
Stepped down in the water
To bathe in the cool of the day.
And before it got dark,
She opened the ark,
And saw the sweet infant so gay.

Then little Moses grows up, slays the Egyptian, leads the Jews – it's a great song And I thought it fit pretty well into the movie. Everybody's in this film: the Carter Family, Hank Williams, Woody Guthrie, Beethoven. Who is going to understand this film? Where are the people to understand this film – a film which needs no understanding?

JC: Who understands *Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands*?

BD: I do... Its strange. I finally feel in the position of someone who people want to interview enough that they'll fly you into town, put you up in a hotel, pay all your expenses and give you a tour of the city. I'm finally in that position. I once went to see the king of the Gypsies in southern France. This guy had twelve wives and 100 children. He was in the antique business and had a junkyard, but he'd had a heart attack before I'd come to see him. All his wives and children had left and the gypsy clan had left him with only one wife and a couple of kids and a dog. What happens is that after he dies they'll all come back. They smell death and they leave. That's what happens in life. And I was very affected by seeing that.

JC: Did you feel something like that in the past four years?

BD: You're talking about 1973? I don't even remember 1973. I'm talking about the spring of 1975. There was a lack of targets at that time. But I don't remember what happened last week.

JC: But you probably remember your childhood clearly.

BD: My childhood is so far away... it's like I don't even remember being a child. I think it was someone else who was a child. Did you ever think like that? I'm not sure that what happened to me yesterday was true.

JC: But you seem sure of yourself.

BD: I'm sure of my dream self. I live in my dreams, I don't really live in the actual world.

" 'I'll let you be in my dreams
If I can be in your dreams.'
I said that."

– Bob Dylan 1963.

Late 1977
John Rockwell interview for New York Times, Santa Monica, CA

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Dylan: **'My Film Is Truer Than Reality'**
By JOHN ROCKWELL
Santa Monica, Calif.

Bob Dylan is the almost unchallenged leader of American popular music or at least of white American popular music. He is our pre-eminent former folkie and present-day rock-and-roller, an evocative and mystical poet, a moving composer and an electrifying performer. But he has never been content with all that. He has written a novel, published a book of his writings and drawings, appeared in two films about himself and acted a fictional role in a third, and continues to enlist his services in behalf of controversial political causes.

Now Mr. Dylan is about to descend upon us in yet another guise—that of the compleat filmmaker. His four-hour film, "*Renaldo and Clara,*" is set to open in New York, Los Angeles and Minneapolis on Jan. 25. Mr. Dylan produced it, wrote it (insofar as it was written at all), directed and co-edited it, stars in it and is distributing it. And although he has usually maintained a guarded distance from the press, he is even talking about it.

"*Renaldo and Clara*" is going to confuse and annoy as many people as it fascinates. Although it includes extensive concert footage from the Rolling Thunder Revue, the hit-and-run Bicentennial tour Mr. Dylan staged in 1976 with such performers as Joan Baez, Ronee Blakley. Bob Neuwirth, Allen Ginsberg, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Roger McGuinn, Mick Ronson and Joni Mitchell, it is by no means a typical rock-and-roll tour film. Linking the concept footage and providing it a dramatic context is a largely non-narrative series of recurrent images, semi-improvised skits and out-and-out acting. What story there is involves the mostly romantic tribulations of a clown-faced singer named Renaldo (Mr. Dylan), especially in relation to the woman in his life (Clara, played by his wife, Sara) and a woman from his past (Miss Baez). But these scenes are far outnumbered by others in which the various Rolling Thunder performers sometimes play themselves and sometimes impersonate more or less fictionalized characters of their own or Mr. Dylan's invention. And sometimes it's very clear that the center of the film is not Renaldo at all, but the "real" Bob Dylan.

The result is a grandly ambitious, sometimes muddled effort to pose a complex of philosophical questions and to dig behind the outer reality of Mr. Dylan's life and career. Whether it all works, and whether lots of people will pay to see it, remains for the film critics and individual movie-goers to decide; Mr. Dylan himself, encountered in a rehearsal studio in Santa Monica, says he's happy with the film and determined to continue expressing himself in the cinematic medium.

"Music is my first love," he began, tucked into a chair next to a room in which a man was methodically tuning a piano, plunking out sweet and sour chords one after another. **"But in writing songs I've learned as much from Cézanne as I have from Woody Guthrie. I feel I have a lot in common with the visual side of it, because the songs I write are basically songs of realism. To play upon the realism and draw the abstraction out of the realism is what I do."**

To judge from tales heard during the tour and from Sam Shepard's recent "Rolling. Thunder Logbook"—Mr. Shepard, the playwright, was hired to provide dialogue for "*Renaldo and Clara,*" but Mr. Dylan amicably says now that not many of his scenes were used because of a **"conflict in ideas"**— the shooting of Mr. Dylan's movie sometimes approached chaos. Film crews scurried about not sure of what they were supposed to be filming, often arriving after some particularly amusing potential scene had already transpired. Mr. Dylan admits some of this, although naturally he defends the film stoutly. **"We learned a lot from this film,"** he says,

twisting restlessly in his chair. **"I feel there was more control all the time, but I didn't have as much control as I would like to have had, in terms of preconceiving. This was a movie done without a script. There were ideas from the beginning, but a lot of this film developed as we were doing it. Quite a bit was improvised, but only within certain rules. No one was aware of how they would be fitting into it. I knew, because I was behind it."**

Mr. Dylan disclaims any specific literary allusion for the title, which like much else in the picture came to them after they had begun shooting. He will say only that the two names are **"just two people, madly in love."** The fact that the two people are played by himself and his wife, will be of special interest to Dylan fans, to be sure, especially because, since the editing was completed late last spring, Mr. Dylan and his wife have been involved in particularly bitter divorce proceedings, complete with teams of detectives herding their five children back and forth. The climactic scenes of the film include Mr. and Mrs. Dylan and Miss Baez, his lover a decade ago, dressed as a mysterious lady carrying a rose (who, before she enters a building to encounter the other two, is played by Mrs. Dylan). These scenes are intercut with Mr. Dylan singing his "*Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands*" (which he says he wrote for his wife) and "*Sara*." But despite all of this, Mr. Dylan insists that a knowledge of any of his domestic details or indeed the identity of the myriad of more or less obscure Rolling Thunder musicians and poets who wander through the film is not crucial to an enjoyment or understanding of it.

"I don't think it's important whether the audience knows anyone in the film or not," he argues. **"Well, it might make a little difference. But we wouldn't have made the film and spent this much time on it"** and money—"*Renaldo and Clara*" cost a reported $1,250,000 to make, not counting the $400,000 to $600,000 to launch the initial three-city engagement if we thought it was just a personal movie for people who know people in it. If the audience is concerned with who's in it, then they're not receiving the movie the way they should be receiving it.

"You cannot be in your own work. You can't stand in the middle of the canvas or you'll die. I'm not interest in documentaries and I'm not moved by them. Bob Dylan is portrayed in this movie by Ronnie Hawkins (the veteran rockabilly singer for whom the Band once worked as backup musicians)**. He is Bob Dylan for all believable purposes, and if you don't believe that, just see the movie. What's in people's minds, what they bring to it, what their preconceived ideas are, that we don't want to even bother with. All the truth you need to know is given to you. The camera doesn't lie."**

Still, people are going to insist upon seeing the principal character as "Bob Dylan" rather than "Renaldo," and the film derives strength from these very confusions and tensions. Mr. Dylan suggests that "*Renaldo and Clara*" is ultimately about the duality between illusion and reality, and about a search for our real selves under the varying masks of appearance. He himself appears in the film as a performer in plastic mask and white face, as Renaldo and Bob Dylan and Robert Zimmerman (the name with which he was born), as a self-conscious extension of a poetic tradition from the English Romantics through Jack Kerouac and Mr. Ginsberg, as the leading figure in the 1960's Greenwich Village folk scene and so forth. And the others can be seen as themselves, as reflections of Mr. Dylan's image of them and—in the case of his wife and Miss Baez—both his fantasies about them and their perceptions of him.

"I don't write songs for escape," Mr. Dylan reflected, and the same could be said of his film. **"My experience dictates what the songs are about, and then I elaborate it with whatever technique I have. It isn't the experience that defines it, it's the feeling arising out of the experience.**

"What this movie does is create a battle between reality and illusion. It's about man's basic nature being duality—between darkness and light, between freedom and oppression. We all have many names, and our own true name is deeply inside of us. What we project is not a name, but energy, and the energy has no name. It doesn't matter what people think they're seeing in this film; it's just how they feel."

These are interesting ideas, but the real question facing audiences when the film is released is whether Mr. Dylan has succeeded in shaping them into an artistically persuasive cinematic form, or whether inexperience and self-indulgence have blunted their impact. Mr. Dylan himself doesn't think the film's potential audience will be alienated by its complexity or its length. **"We had a problem cutting it down,"** he admits, **"but the movie was always going to be too long right from the beginning. For some people it's four hours too long. It's not a problem of time. The problem is in the area of concentration. Four hours is not a long time to concentrate."**

From his conversation it becomes rapidly clear that Mr. Dylan retained creative and financial control over his film because of a deep distrust of the conventional methods of American filmmaking and because he doubted that the studio system would understand his ideas or let him do what he wanted to do.

"We make our movies a little differently than most people. I've worked on sets of movies (notably Sam Peckinpah's "*Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*," in which he had a leading role)**, and there's no way you can make a really creative movie in a system that breeds so much discontent. You have, to have your own crew and your own people to do it."**

Similarly with distribution. "*Renaldo and Clara*" is being distributed by the newly founded Circuit Films, headed by Mr. Dylan's 36-year-old brother, David Zimmerman, based in their home state of Minnesota and relying primarily on people with experience in the music business rather than Hollywood and New York regulars.

"He's doing it with people we have confidence in," says Mr. Dylan, **"mainly because we didn't know any people in the film business. All I know is what people tell me—how everyone takes a piece of this and a piece of that. That's irrelevant, but how they understand the movie is relevant. I know there are people out there who want to see this film, and the film business might not be keyed into that."**

Mr. Dylan's immediate future plans involve music—he's written a batch of songs over the summer and is currently auditioning musicians for a new band in Santa Monica. If there's time he hopes to cut a studio album—there will be no sound track album from "*Renaldo and Clara*," partly to underscore that it's not a tour film and partly because there already has been one Rolling Thunder Revue live album. In mid-February he begins a tour of the Far East, to be followed by America in the spring and, possibly, Europe in the late fall and following winter. In the meantime, however, he has other film projects in mind, too, and sturdily resists the notion that "*Renaldo and Clara*" represents an onscreen learning process in movie-making, a glorified home movie or a wallowing in details of his domestic life better left private.

"I'm not doing this to learn the craft of film; I'm doing it to make movies—to put forth a certain vision which I carry around and can't express on any other canvas. This movie's a play-act based on reality. It hopes to transcend that reality and get something out of the ashes which is better than that reality, will live longer than that reality and will be more true than that reality."

January 1978
Joel Kotkin (*New Times*) Interview, Santa Monica, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 859-863.

During early 1978 Dylan gives a large number of interviews, primarily geared to publicising *Renaldo And Clara*. The Kotkin interview took place at Rundown Studios. Parts of the Interview were syndicated through the *Washington Post* and a separate section appeared in *New Times*. The following is taken from *New Times* February 6th 1978.

RENALDO AND WASSO

Ever since he handled the press on the Rolling Thunder Revue in 1974, Paul Wasserman has been firmly in control of marketing the Bob Dylan legend. And Wasserman now plots out a media strategy for Dylan's *Renaldo and Clara*, much as he has co-ordinated the hype for Diane Keaton, the Rolling Stones, Neil Diamond, Linda Ronstadt, James Taylor and Paul Simon.

"I get the best deal I can get," Wasserman (otherwise known as "Wasso") explains over lunch at the Century City Hamburger Hamlet. The deal, he admits, often includes such things as guaranteed magazine covers for his clients and, sometimes, control over the copy inside.

"Why do the magazines do it?" Wasserman snarls. "Well, it's because they want the stars to sell more copies. Whose fault is it if they agree to put them on the cover? The star? The press agent? Or, maybe the press for going along with it?"

But even for Wasso, hyping *Renaldo and Clara* presents problems. The movie, four hours long and nearly incomprehensible, is not a box-office natural, and Dylan knows it. "The first thing Bob told me about the movie," Wasso recalls, allowing a rare smile, "was, **'It's not Star Wars, is it Paul?'**..."

Nevertheless, Wasserman told a somewhat surprised Dylan that with a few cover stories and interviews in the right places, the people out there, their interest in his mystique rekindled, would flock to the theaters.

"Bob asked me if I could do anything with this picture," Wasso says. "I said I could do something with the press if he could make himself available. After all, the real Dylan buffs would only keep us going for the first few couple of weeks."

Among the vehicles chosen to disseminate the Dylan resurrection were the *New York Times*, *the Washington Post*, *Playboy*, *New York*, *Rolling Stone* and *New Times* none of whose writers would have stood a chance of getting through Dylan's Point Dume door before the release of *Renaldo and Clara*.

But this doesn't mean the star's snowing us explains Dylan's pied hyper. "When Dylan won't do interviews, he's a – –: but when he needs to do them, he's selling out," Wasserman snorts. "You just can't win."

It is a drab day in Santa Monica, a slow news day in a slow news decade, and therefore a perfect day for Paul Wasserman, who is talking on a wall phone in a converted furniture store where Dylan has established his West Coast theater of operations. Dylan arrives an hour late:

"Paul, aren't I supposed to talk to someone?" he asks in a bored monotone. Wasserman points at me and Dylan passes by without another word. Fifteen minutes later, led by Wasserman, Dylan enters dressed in white shoes, a white sweat shirt and white pants. He offers a limp handshake. Finally Wasserman's imposing presence departs and Dylan is left sniffling with flu his small hooked (and now quite red) nose the only bit of color to break the monotony of his snowy dress. He fidgets crossing and recrossing his legs, as the man who once wrote "propaganda all is phony," attempts to explain his media blitz:

JK: Journalists like to play a game about "rebel of the sixties selling out." Has that sort of scrutiny affected your life?

BD: Uh-uh. Those people are not my true fans.

JK: You mean like *People* magazine?

BD: Yeah. I can't get into that stuff. My world is just a world where I know people as people – artists, pickpockets and thieves are all in it. Whatever is written about me. I just have to pay no attention.

JK: Have you been following the media coverage?

BD: No. Just Jon's. [Rolling Stone's Jonathan Cott]

JK: What did you think of that?

BD: Jon's piece was fine. He seemed to understand the movie.

JK: Do you think the movie will be understood by the people who see it?

BD: I don't really think about that. The people who are meant to see it will see it.

JK: Any particular group?

BD: All the people who are interested in poetry or in human reason at all. I think they'll find something in there to identify with.

JK: Anything in particular?

BD: I don't really know. That's not my business... to sell the movie.

JK: But you are doing interviews?

BD: Yeah, only so that people will know there's a movie out. That's the only reason.

JK: Do you care whether the movie makes money or not?

BD: I care, but it's not the main reason we made the movie.

JK: What would be the main reason?

BD: Just to get the movie out of my system.

JK: To exorcise a ghost in any way?

BD: No. No. It's a movie. It's an art form. I'm an artist working in art and different mediums. Who wouldn't want to make a movie if they thought they could? It's a visionary dream which I always wanted to do.

JK: A lot of readers who read newspapers are regular everyday people. If you're supposedly expressing a vision, they need a vision, too, so they can understand.

BD: I don't know who you are talking about.

JK: The average person...

BD: I don't know anybody who is an average person.

JK: Do you think that there are many people who won't be able to understand the movie?

BD: Possibly... When we were writing those songs in the early days a lot of people didn't grasp them immediately. It's the same thing with the movie. A lot of people aren't going to be able to understand it... the times don't allow them to understand it.

JK: Do you think that money is irrelevant in this business? You once said, 'Money doesn't exist because I don't recognize it.'

BD: Well, I care to a certain extent. There's no salvation in money. If you have enough money to buy a Cadillac, that's cool. That's all I can tell you about money...

JK: But the type of work you did certainly requires capital... Do you think that as you've gotten older you've gotten better at handling money?

BD: Oh, I don't know. I couldn't say.

JK: Well, part of being good at business is hiring the right people, like Paul.

BD: Paul is a publicity man.

JK: But what he does generates money.

BD: Yeah, that's correct. You know, advertising is a big thing, but we couldn't afford it so we hired Paul, see.

JK: Paul is there so you can advertise with your name?

BD: Well, yeah, well, right. I met Paul on that Bob Dylan/Band tour in 1974. We had a relationship then and...

JK: And obviously you trust him.

BD: Uh-huh.

JK: Do you feel comfortable with yourself as a movie maker?

BD: No, I don't know nothing about making movies. I don't think of myself as a film maker. If da Vinci were alive, or Van Gogh, or if Rembrandt were alive, they'd be making films.

JK: And therefore it's alright for you to be making films.

BD: Exactly. If someone feels they can do it. What's to stop somebody from giving up their job as an accountant to become a rodeo rider?

JK: This is 1978, and we still don't know what the seventies are all about...

BD: I don't know what the seventies are all about. The sixties were a shattering decade. The same thing happened in the 1860's. It seems to happen in the middle of the century. Everything happens in those middle years. The 1960's were not any different than that. Now we're in the seventies, and it's a period of reconstruction. Nothing is happening.

JK: We've grown up in a much more violent, much poorer, much more commercialised world than the one you grew up in. If this generation renounces what your generation did, what will be the continuity?

BD: Well, you know, the people of my generation didn't try to make rules for anybody. The people of my generation rebelled against what was; the people in the fifties generation didn't do that.

JK: Do you think this generation is replaying the fifties?

BD: I dunno. I don't go out to high schools to find out what high school kids are thinking. It ain't a bad idea, but I don't consider myself a spokesman for any generation. I mean, they say the sun is going to blow up in a billion years, so what are we talking about – the death of the planet. Looking at it that way, what difference does it make to talk of one generation to the next? I never gave much thought to the generation gap, you know.

JK: Yeah, and what amazes me about your generation is your lack of concern for the people coming up behind you.

BD: Because it wiped out, my whole generation... my whole generation was taught a lot of lessons.

JK: And one of the lessons is not to worry about the generation behind you?

BD: Well, no, yeah-well, of course I worry about the next generation. I think about it.

JK: I have to worry about it – it's my generation.

BD: Yeah, you're right, I do, too, I have children. I'm not saying I don't have any concern, but you have to deal with your own first. You can't go out and try to save the world. You just say what is available to you to say.

JK: And that's where your effort is going now?

BD: Well, it's no effort. I don't create art out of effort. I have a hard enough time just dealing with my life on a day-to day basis. I can't think of all these cultural or cultural art or political... these things don't mean anything to me. It's like that song *Ramona*: "*Everything passes, everything changes, just do what you think you should do. Some day maybe, who knows, baby, I'll come crying to you.*" That's the way it is.

JK: Publications are being told that if you want to interview Bob Dylan you're going to have to put him on the cover.

BD: I wouldn't know about that.

JK: Do you care at all?

BD: No. I don't care. We have a purpose behind doing these interviews. We're not just going out and doing interviews for no reason. There is a purpose to these interviews. If magazines want an interview, now is the time. I think they might be interested to hear about *Renaldo And Clara*. You haven't even asked me too much about the movie. Only a little bit.

JK: Well, Cott's interview went into that in tremendous detail. I frankly did not understand it completely.

BD: Well, maybe if you saw it again you could get closer to it. Maybe it was just like a new experience for you. Maybe you hadn't had those experiences in life yet. That could be it too.

JK: It's not possible that the movie is at all disjointed?

BD: No. No possibility of that. No way.

JK: Why do you say that?

BD: Did you sit through the whole movie?

JK: I sat through about three hours.

BD: Do you smoke a lot of dope?

JK: I have in my day.

BD: That's the reason.

JK: I'm sure there were people in the movie theater who had smoked a lot more dope than I had.

BD: How old were you when you first started smoking dope?

JK: Thirteen.

BD: Well, O.K. There's your reason right there.

JK: Because I'm a hopeless dope addict?

BD: Your mind has been... You smoked dope before you knew how to smoke dope.

JK: Well, I sat through the two Ivans, I'm a voracious reader. And I have no trouble with Faulkner... Do you feel at all uncomfortable with all these interviews? Paul has you booked with all these obnoxious people. Maybe you're bored.

BD: I'm not bored. Maybe you're bored.

JK: I'm not bored.

BD: I'm not bored. Don't mistake my restlessness for boredom.

JK: Are you always this restless?

BD: Yeah. I'm a restless person.

Late January 1978
The Photoplay Interview, Los Angeles, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1027-1029.

Another in the large series of promotional interviews for *Renaldo And Clara* conducted whilst Dylan was rehearsing at Rundown Studios. This one for *Photoplay* magazine is by an unknown journalist. Heylin (*Stolen Moments*) places this as happening between January 26th and 31st 1978.

DYLAN DEFENDS HIS FOUR-HOUR MOVIE

Bob Dylan has not been having much success with his marathon movie, *Renaldo and Clara*. Dylan, that most enigmatic of pop music superstars, explained that it was filmed during his 1975-76 tour of New England and Canada but it is not a documentary.

"I'm not attuned to documentaries," said Dylan, who was the subject of two cinéma vérité films, '*Dont Look Back*' and '*Eat The Document*', in the late sixties and more recently he made a guest appearance in '*The Last Waltz*' which stars The Band in their last concert. **"Renaldo and Clara could be called a documentary-type movie because it was shot with 16 millimeter hand-held cameras. The concert tour provided background for the film even though I considered editing out the 47 songs in order to allow the story line to stand on its own."**

"I didn't because people wouldn't like the idea of Bob Dylan in a movie that was not a singing movie. They think I'm Gene Autrey or Roy Rogers."

Nobody viewing the 3 hour and 52 minute film which Dylan wrote, directed and co-edited, could possibly confuse it with the simple tale of a singing troubadour. Dylan calls the film **"a dream, but not even my dream. It has a theme which I think is pretty self-explanatory. *Renaldo and Clara* has a purpose and it's all connected, It might seem vague but it isn't."**

'Vague' was one word, along with 'tedious' and 'boring', that most American critics used to describe Dylan's picture. The critical consensus is that Dylan should simply have stuck to the concert scenes and dumped the story, described mostly as an ego trip for the star in a highly extensive 'home-movie'. The difficult-to-describe plot has Dylan playing himself and a Dylan-like Renaldo, which his ex-wife Sara calls him in the latter part of the film. Sara is Clara and 'Nashville' star Ronee Blakely is cast as Mrs. Dylan opposite country musician Ronnie Hawkins as Mr. Dylan. To further blur the connections between illusion and reality, folk singer Joan Baez, an ex-girlfriend of Dylan's, wanders through the movie as a mysterious 'Woman in White' who seems to be vying with Clara for the affections of Renaldo.

Renaldo And Clara has scenes where Dylan and Sara discuss whether they should continue their romantic involvement. Were they meant to indicate marital troubles between the real-life couple? Their marriage break-up last year resulted in a bitter court fight for custody of the five children and for possession of the two million dollar mansion in Malibu.

"No," Dylan answers. **"The movie was conceived in 1975 before any of this came about. The divorce was just one of those inevitable things."**

Asked what film-makers he admires, Dylan cited John Ford, Elia Kazan and Sam Peckinpah, who directed Bob's straight acting debut in *Pat Garrett and Billy The Kid* in 1973. Dylan admits

he tried for 'touches' of those directors in his movie. **"Also, I was influenced by Andy Warhol,"** he said.

"*Renaldo And Clara* was originally intended as a more structured film. I hired playwright Sam Shepard to provide dialogue but we didn't use much of his stuff because of a conflict in ideas. Sam ended up playing a part in the picture. There was a lot of chaos while we were making the film. A lot of good scenes didn't happen because we had already finished improvising them by the time the cameras were ready to film. You can't recapture stuff like that."

"There was a lot of conflict during filming. We had people who didn't understand what we were doing because we didn't have a script. Some who didn't understand were willing to go along with us anyway. Others weren't and that hurt us, and hurt the film. No one was really aware how they would fit into the total picture. I knew because I was behind it."

There were certain surprises in the editing room when Bob and Howard Alk were viewing the 100 hours of film which were shot. **"There was a marvelous scene where David Blue is talking about the folk-singers in New York during the 1960s,"** said Dylan. **"I'd completely forgotten about it but we had to put that scene in the picture."**

Does Dylan think that he has overstuffed the film with too many people and does he think its too long? **"I had a problem cutting it to the present length,"** he said. **"But it was always going to be a long movie, right from the beginning. For some people it's four hours too long. It isn't a problem of time, it's a problem of concentration. Four hours is not a long time to concentrate."**

Dylan, who financed *Renaldo And Clara* with his own money, decided to release it through Circuit Films, a new company headed by Bob's 36-year old brother, David Zimmerman. Circuit is based in Minnesota, Bob's home state, far from the big-studio system of Hollywood.

"We took the movie to one of the major studios," said Bob. **"They treated us like dogs. As far as I can remember they didn't want to see more than 15 minutes of the film before they bought the picture. We felt it only proper they should see it all. Besides a major studio would never release this as a four-hour movie. They thought it should run for 1½ hours and that it had to be all music. Everybody had something to say."**

Obviously Dylan has a deep distrust for the conventional methods of American filmmaking. But he definitely has more movie plans in the future. **"We'll make more movies but make them differently from most people,"** he said. **"I learned by working in *Pat Garrett* that there is no way you can make a really creative movie in Hollywood. It's a system that breeds so much discontent. You have to have your own crew and your own people to make a movie your own way."**

"There will be no album from *Renaldo And Clara*. I don't want people to have the impression it's a musical."

22 January 1978
Gregg Kilday interview for *Los Angeles Times*, Santa Monica, CA

Source: *Los Angeles Times*, Jan 22, 1978

Film-Maker Dylan: A Peek Behind the Mask
BY GREGG KILDAY

Bob Dylan has decided to become his own advance man: The 36-year-old singer-songwriter is trying to save himself a few million dollars in publicity costs by volunteering to be interviewed about his latest project, a sprawling four-hour film titled "*Renaldo and Clara*," which opens Wednesday at the Regent Theater in Westwood and the Lido Theater in Newport Beach.

Throughout most of his 16-year career, Dylan has regarded reporters warily and steadfastly kept his distance from the camera's eye. When he has been forced to stand still long enough to allow himself to be photographed, he has calculatingly filtered his personality through a series of archetypal poses: From the wandering urban troubadour of "*The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*" through the haunted poet-imagist of "*Blonde on Blonde*," the playful country boy of "*Nashville Skyline*" and the wizened medicine man of "*Desire*," Dylan has fashioned an identity out of an ever-changing succession of masks.

Not surprisingly, then, masks also provide the key to "*Renaldo and Clara*," in which Dylan makes his entrance wearing a translucent plastic mask that both reveals and distorts his countenance as if to erase—or maybe to suggest—his many previous incarnations. According to the movie's credits, Dylan is actually playing a character called Renaldo, a quasi-mythical creation of vague definition. But the song that the masked Renaldo is singing is Dylan's own "*When I Paint My Masterpiece*" and the setting is Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue as it tours the New England countryside during the fall of 1976.

The movie is full of just such teasing logic: Some of Dylan's fellow musicians play themselves and some play each other. For some scenes, they impersonate pilgrims and cowboys, gypsies and hookers; for others, they flirt recklessly with their own images in the gossip columns. Dylan's ex-wife Sara is seen in the co-starring role of Clara. Singer-actress Ronee Blakley is cast as "Mrs. Dylan" opposite country musician Ronnie Hawkins in the guise of "Bob Dylan." And throughout the movie's alternating layers of concert footage and improvised dramatic vignettes, Joan Baez wends her way as a mysterious figure by the name of the Woman in White who appears to he headed for a confrontation with Clara over the affections of Renaldo. Dylan is not about to sort out the movie's various illusions. But because "*Renaldo and Clara*" is venturing onto the marketplace without benefit of a major distributor, Dylan at least was willing to talk about the making of the film.

Dressed in rumpled white pants, white sweatshirt and black leather jacket, Dylan took a seat on an abandoned sofa in an empty room in a Santa Monica rehearsal hall where he has been trying out a new band for an upcoming tour of the Far East.

"I was ready to do something different, something new, and this is what it turned out to be," Dylan said matter-of-factly, explaining that the idea of the film had developed simultaneously with his plans for the Rolling Thunder Revue and that he spent the summer preceding the '75 tour in New York City **"doing research in the streets—that summer I gathered the crew, the elements in it, I was researching the possibilities of making this film and so I just left myself open."**

Dylan has had brushes with film in the past: Filmmaker D.A. Pennebaker followed him to England in 1966 for the documentary, "*Don't Look Back*." And Dylan himself recorded one world tour for a documentary that never quite surfaced on ABC. But he has since soured on the

whole notion of such road films and insists that "*Renaldo and Clara*" be viewed as a fictional movie rather than another documentary about a concert tour.

"Documentary films, I haven't learned much from them. I'm not too attuned to documentaries," Dylan stated. **"This film could be called a documentary-type film because it was shot with 16mm hand-held cameras. But if I had my way, we would have shot it with big 35mm Panavision cameras."**

Asked what film-makers he admires, Dylan cited John Ford, Elia Kazan **"up through '*Splendor in the Grass*',"** and Sam Peckinpah, for whom he made his acting debut in "*Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*." **"And I like Warhol a lot,"** Dylan added. **"I think his '*Empire State Building*' is more exciting than Bergman."**

It is easy enough to spot Warhol's influence in the long takes, the elaborate play-acting and the almost casual sense of personal drama that runs throughout "*Renaldo and Clara*." But connections—however fragile—can also be made with Ford, Kazan and Peckinpah, with whom Dylan shares a preoccupation with rethinking and reshaping American myths.

The now-standard cowboy-outlaw-poet-rock-musician paradigm provides one constantly shifting focus of attention for the film. It is balanced by an equally fluid view of women that moves between images of fortune-tellers and lovers, mothers and whores. However, the one myth that dominates "*Renaldo and Clara*" is, of course, Dylan's own. The movie deals, he admitted, **"with the image which I assume everyone is concerned with. It deals with those images, but it goes beyond those images. The image is broken apart and you see what's behind the images. You see the truth behind the idle truth, a kind of resurrection of the common man as opposed to gratification of the image or the ego."**

Although the movie's confusions between illusion and reality sound complex, Dylan contends that their origins are actually quite simple: **"We started out with a simple love triangle story,"** he said. **"But the more deeply involved I got I realized most of it happens all in the mind. Things that happen in the outerday world are just manifestations of the inner mind. And what I was trying to capture was what the inner mind was going through.**

"The idea of the mask was to reveal the inner self-all these words I'm throwing at you have been used so many times before, but I mean just that—the mask is more a replica of the inner self than the face. We knew we had to do the movie with masks in order for it to be successful."

Filmed at a reported $1.25 million, "*Renaldo and Clara*" was a structured exercise that quickly turned into an improvisational experiment. Playwright Sam Shepard was brought aboard to rough out scenes, but due to what Dylan describes as **"a miscommunication,"** Shepard's role was soon reduced to that of a minor player. Actors Harry Dean Stanton and Helena Kallianiotes (who delivers a speech in "*Renaldo and Clara*" not that far removed from the tough hitchhiker's lament that she unleashed in "*Five Easy Pieces*") were invited to come along because, as Dylan puts it, **"we needed people who could stand in front of the camera and set an example for the rest of us,"** but at a certain point they dropped off the tour. To read Shepard's subsequent account in his book, "*Rolling Thunder Logbook*," and to hear Dylan tell it, a certain amount of chaos reigned.

"The film could have been much better if people could have had a little more belief, been a little freer," Dylan commented. **"There was a lot of conflict on this film. We had people who didn't understand what we were doing, but who were willing to go along with it. And we had people working on the tour who didn't understand and weren't willing to go along with us. It hurt us. It was good for the show, but it hurt the film. There were scenes that were planned out that would have added another element, but for one reason or another, they never panned out."**

For example, a number of violent special effects that Dylan learned of while working on the Peckinpah film had to be jettisoned. **"We were going to blow up a car that had the Masked Tortilla** (a character played by musician Bob Neuwirth) **in it. That didn't happen. So it kind of leaves the Masked Tortilla hanging,"** Dylan laughed. **"It would have finished him off in a more conclusive way. Yeah, a lot of scenes didn't happen."**

In the process of editing the 40 hours of film, though, Dylan discovered compensatory moments, such as David Blue's spoken memoirs of the New York City folk scene of the early '60s, that he hadn't even realized had been shot. Dylan claims he considered editing out many of the movie's 47 songs, in order to allow the story line to stand on its own. **"But people would not like the idea of Bob Dylan in a movie that was not a singing movie,"** Dylan complained. **"They think I'm Gene Autry or Roy Rogers."** So, in the end, Dylan opted for the movie's complex counterpoint of song and drama, a cumulative effect that he likens to a dream or, perhaps, a Cubist painting by Picasso.

There are points at which the dream becomes troubled. Dylan included in the finished film an interview with convicted murderer Rubin Carter, even though Carter's conviction was upheld in a second trial that took place after the film was shot. **"My feelings on that haven't changed at all,"** Dylan said of his belief that Carter has been unfairly treated by the legal system.

Dylan also has persisted in using footage of his ex-wife, Sara, from whom he was divorced last June, even though he knows it will only titillate the curiosity of some members of the audience. **"I can't avoid publicity,"** Dylan said. **"I don't know what people know about me, though. I don't see why that should affect what I do. The film is actually very little about me. It's a dream. To put it more correctly, it isn't even my dream."**

"*Renaldo and Clara*" is, however, quite definitely Bob Dylan's movie. To ensure his control of its advertising and distribution, he rejected overtures from a number of major companies. The movie is now being distributed independently through Circuit Films, a Minnesota-based firm established by Dylan's younger brother, David Zimmerman.

Nevertheless, Dylan couldn't resist a final contradiction. He already is thinking about shooting another movie next fall or winter, a movie **"without masks, more of a straight-line movie."** Concluded Dylan, **"If we could make a deal with a studio, I think the next movie we could do cheaper. We could do the job easier, quicker, smoother on a soundstage. We're still talking about a small budget, so it may be to our advantage next time to work in a Hollywood studio."**

24 January 1978
Press Conference, Santa Monica, California

Source: Robert Hilburn's report in *Los Angeles Times*, 28 Jan 1978

ROBERT HILBURN
Bob Dylan—Meeting the Press

Bob Dylan opened his press conference this week with a question of his own.

Spotting a reporter whose story about the songwriter's much-publicized Malibu home once upset him, Dylan asked the writer icily: **"Do you want to talk about my house or my movie?"**

The remark reflected the media testiness associated with Dylan ever since his sarcastic encounter with a *Time* magazine correspondent in "*Don't Look Back*," the decade-old film documentary.

But it proved a false alarm. Except for verbal jousting with an Australian-based writer who wondered if Dylan felt guilty for having changed his name from Bob Zimmerman, things went smoothly. Surprisingly so.

Sitting in the "playback" room on the first floor of a two-story Santa Monica rehearsal hall, Dylan waded patiently through nearly 90 minutes of questions from mostly foreign journalists.

The usually private Dylan has made himself available to the press in recent weeks to draw attention to his new "*Renaldo & Clara*" film. This week's conferences had been planned as a single session but so many writers showed up from Japan that a separate meeting was set up for them.

"I've never been opposed to talking to the press," Dylan said, when asked about his general media hesitancy. **"It's just that I usually don't have anything to talk to them about."**

Though most of the questions centered on the film and an upcoming Japan-Australia tour, some touched on such classic fan magazine fodder as "What's your favorite food," and whether Dylan a really pals around with Mick Jagger and Bruce Springsteen. Springsteen was hailed by some critics as the "new" Dylan.

The irony is that one of the themes of "*Renaldo & Clara*" is that attempts to peek into an artist's private life only tend to cloud the understanding of his art.

Rather than the sarcasm one might have expected in response to those questions, Dylan reacted with wry amusement. **"Whisky,"** he quipped, when queried about his favorite dish. Then, he changed it to ice cream. After assuring the writers he doesn't hang out with Jagger and Springsteen, he added, **"But Bruce does write some pretty good songs..."**

"I think the movie is pretty self-explanatory." Dylan told the first group of writers. **"It might seem vague, but it isn't. It's all got a purpose and it's all connected. It might be a little different from what you're used to seeing, but I think in time it'll prove true...**

"If it's still around in 10 or 12 years, then it'll have done well. What happens on opening night isn't too important because everybody's not going to see it on opening night."

Speaking far more concretely than in the recent, almost amorphous *Rolling Stone* interview, Dylan discussed the reported financing of the $1.25 million film and his future movie plans. **"I tried to get financing for a film I tried to do before this and it was impossible..."** the financiers wanted to know exactly what they were going to be getting for their money. **"We financed...** ('Renaldo')... **with the Rolling Thunder tour. The money that was coming into the box office was going out all for the movie."**

Dylan also explained why he distributed the film himself rather than turn to a major Hollywood studio. **"They wouldn't let this movie run long enough... If they released it and it didn't do well in three or four weeks, they'd take it off the market. It's not that kind of picture.**

"Also, some of them wanted all music... some said it has to be an hour and a half. Others would say it has to be more of '*you*' and less of everybody else. Everybody had something like that to say."

Dylan said he'd like to begin another film this year, but said he'd probably shy away from the multiple roles of actor, writer and director that he undertook this time: **"I don't want to write it all. I wouldn't even want to direct it. I just want to help push it along. I'll be in it and I want to see a certain story... but I might get some help..."**

Moving to other aspects of his career, Dylan was asked why he stayed away from concerts so long in the late '60s and early '70s. He also was asked if he was surprised such a large, intense following was waiting for him when he did return to live shows in '74.

"I (stayed away because I) **had been touring so much: 10, 11 months a year. It finally got to me... And the sound wasn't right, anyway. The sophisticated sound equipment has just come into being the past few years.**

"I was surprised (at the response)**... I remember when we opened in Chicago... all those people there. But if they weren't there, I'd just have gone back to the clubs. I'm just up there being a servant to the songs."**

Dylan also said he was worried in '74 whether the old songs would be meaningful—to him and to audiences. **"Maybe I wouldn't feel like singing them anymore,"** he noted. **"But they still felt right I felt that feeling from the rest of the people, too. The songs held up. The arrangements always change. That's gotta be expected. We've got some new arrangements** (for this tour) **that you wouldn't even think were the same songs."**

After the Japan and Australia tours, Dylan expects to record an album in L.A. Presumably, it'll be released in time for a late spring or early summer U.S. tour. The U.S. schedule will be a mixture of large and small halls, and may include some cities that he didn't reach on the Band or Rolling Thunder tours.

For the overseas dates, Dylan will be backed by a 13-piece band, including female backup singers. The rhythm section includes Rolling Thunder holdovers Rob Stoner on bass, David Mansfield on steel guitar/violin and Steven Soles on guitar.

Early February 1978
Philip Fleishman Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1031-1036.

An interview held some time early on in February 1978 and published in the March 20th edition of *Maclean's*. Philip Fleishman is a contributing editor of the magazine. It is believed that the interview took place in the Los Angeles area.

Bob Dylan, folk-poet laureate to a generation, has turned moviemaker. And if you had trouble understanding his songs, wait until you see his movie. His first major effort, much of it filmed during his sensational transcontinental musical tour, Rolling Thunder Revue, more than two years ago, defies easy description. Titled *Renaldo And Clara*, it runs for more than four hours and throws a series of contradictions at the audience. Dylan appears as the character Renaldo, while the singer Ronnie Hawkins plays Bob Dylan. Dylan's then-wife Sara (they divorced last year after 11 years of marriage) is Clara, while country singer Ronee Blakley plays Mrs. Bob Dylan. And Joan Baez, for years the main woman in Dylan's life, is billed as The Woman In White. The film is ad-libbed and the fact that the cast is composed of musicians, not actors, is often painfully apparent.

The movie has not been a success. Because of its extraordinary length it had opened by early March in only two theatres, in New York and Los Angeles. Besides, having chosen not to "sell out" to the major distributors, Dylan was having the film handled by a company set up by his brother. Suddenly the reclusive singer/guitarist was granting selected interviews (critics said to avoid the costs of advertising *Renaldo and Clara*).

Many of Dylan's responses in this conversation with *Maclean's* contributing editor Philip Fleishman seem contradictory. But there emerges an image of a man who, despite the immense fame and fortune that have come his way in his 36 years, is trying to live his life with a sense of truth and integrity.

PF: I sat through *Renaldo And Clara* last night and I didn't like it. Images kept returning to me in a way I didn't expect, but overall it held little meaning for me.

BD: Well, you know what the movie's about because it came back to you. It's going to be around for years and years and you'll go see it again sometime and then you'll say "Aha, that's what it was about". Then you'll know and I won't have to tell you. (laughs).

PF: Why do you play a character called Renaldo and not Bob Dylan?

BD: Well, in any song I write or any movie I'm in, I always become the character in it. I play the character Renaldo in the movie. When I sing *It Ain't Me, Babe* I'm another character. It's all a play. My songs are closer to theatre than to ordinary rock and roll.

PF: What are the two main women in your life, your ex-wife Sara and Joan Baez doing in the film if there isn't some underlying theme you were trying to get across?

BD: Well, it's the changing of roles. That isn't that far removed from daily life. A man gets up in the morning, puts on his mechanic's suit and he's a mechanic. But on the weekend he's wearing another hat. There's no way I should or could explain the movie. It's all connected, it all makes sense, and if that wasn't the case then I'd have to explain it. But I can't explain (his song) ***Desolation Row* either. It's connected on a level, almost a subliminal level, from scene to scene.**

PF: But this movie goes on for over four hours. You don't mean to tell me that someone's supposed to be able to connect the whole thing subliminally?

BD: Well. I haven't really seen the movie in a while. So much has happened since I have seen it that I would really have to see it again to explain it to you. If I did see it, I could explain it. I haven't seen it in a while.

PF: But what about Sara and Joan Baez? Surely you must remember why they were there.

BD: Yeah, but they were the same woman, as demonstrated in the film. We know that they're different women 'cause we're watching the screen, but in that room (a scene in which they confront the real Bob Dylan about which one he really loves) **they're the same woman.**

PF: I didn't think they were the same woman.

BD: You didn't think that they were the same woman, but if you see the movie again, you'll see they were the same woman. The Woman In White (Baez) **was played earlier by the woman we now call Clara** (Sara Dylan) **who was in that room, and the Woman In White who was in that room then was a manifestation of the past which did or didn't exist. They aren't two different people playing** (laughs)... **I know it's hard to grasp, but it's true nevertheless. They're the same persona.**

PF: Look, I watched that movie and I saw two different women...

BD: But in reality they're not.

PF: In reality they certainly are; one is Joan Baez and one is Sara. And I think to others who watch that film that's how it appears, because there were no symbols or indications given to suggest anything else.

BD: Maybe so, but in reality they're not. They are really the same woman. It's like the ghost stepping outside itself.

PF: The ghost? What ghost?

BD: The ghost in the room... of the woman. (laughs) **There really aren't any women there.** (laughs)

PF: I know. I know... and Bob Dylan wasn't really there. I spent four hours watching this movie, but God knows why.

BD: That's right.

PF: Are you trying to be evasive or are you seriously trying to help me understand?

BD: Ah, evasiveness is all in the mind. It's about what is beneath the mask. The mask in this movie isn't used to hide the inner self, it's used to show the inner self. The mask is more real than the face. The mask isn't hiding anything.

PF: Just what was it that you were trying to get out?

BD: Well. On different days you want to get different things out; your feelings, how they change from day to day. It's just a never-ending well.

PF: You've become a person of almost mythological stature to at least one generation. What, from your perspective, do you see Bob Dylan as having become?

BD: I don't know, I don't deal with that. I only deal on a musical level. You see, I know so much more than the people that listen to me. They might listen to me and hear what I'm doing, but where I come from is a place they might not know and that's what forms my music.

PF: Tell me about those places.

BD: First of all, I only listen to a certain type of music, but that which I do listen to, some of it has profoundly changed my life. If I'd never heard Woody Guthrie or some other people I'd have never been doing what I'm doing – singing and playing my music. Yet how many people who have heard me have heard of them? So when I go through changes and people are looking at me wondering what's he going to do next, they don't have any knowledge of my background. People have a knowledge of the superficial things, see, but they shouldn't be conscious of these things, they shouldn't be bothered by them. Who they think I am or what they think I'm like, or what I'm wearing or what my parents' names were. It's not important. If it were, that's where I'd be.

PF: I've had an image of you as a person who has been very much alone in life.

BD: Well, my influences come from a time when things were simpler. Today things are so complicated. I think at least up in Canada you have more space to breathe but here things are pretty rushed and people are losing track of what happened before. People think of the Sixties as a special, revolutionary time, but if you look at the Sixties you see that they're no different than a lot of other times in the past. In 2060 we'll most probably be having another revolution.

PF: Do you find any contradiction between your Jewish roots and the fundamentalist existential philosophy on which you seem to base yourself?

BD: I don't have a strong Jewish tradition. If anything I'm a pagan Jew. Existentialist Jew, Buddhist Jew... I mean, I don't know what these things mean. Pure Jew? I don't know, I doubt it.

PF: To what extent do you engage in self-mockery? Both as a person and as a film maker.

BD: To no extent, because I am personally playing Renaldo, and Renaldo is responsible. In most of the film he ain't saying anything. Why? Because he ain't got anything to say? No!

PF: To what extent did he say nothing simply because he couldn't think of anything to say at the moment? A lot of your film was ad-libbed, wasn't it?

BD: If I'd have never told anybody that it was improvised, if I'd have shown people the script for this movie, they would have been excited to see the scenes and the dialogue. When we make a movie like this, and this is the only type of movie I'm interested in making, we use all our own people, so everyone knows everyone and has a hand in it. When you have people like this they all know what the other person is going to say and you don't need to write everything down. There was an outline for this movie. I mean, we didn't just all get together and say, "Go do whatever you want." There was an outline for this movie and there was a list of points that we wanted to cover in each scene.

PF: What directors have you admired?

BD: John Houston. Warhol was more than just a director, he busted through to new territory. But Bergman is so cold and lately with his recent films, for some reason, boredom sets in. Now Sam Peckinpah has influenced me; he's got a point of view. I mean, it's a distorted view of romance, a child's view of romance.

PF: How has your breakup with Sara affected your view of romance?

BD: Well, we were married a long time, and nobody in my family, I think, has ever been divorced, so it was a bit of a shock at first. I mean, I don't think that it really has anything to do with feelings. I still love her and I suspect that she still loves me. We just aren't married anymore.

PF: But why did you get married in the first place?

BD: That's a really interesting question. You have economic advantages if you're married, and if you're having children, you should be married.

PF: Why?

BD: I don't know. I'm just old-fashioned that way. Ah, who am I to say? Nobody's the same. No, I take that back. You don't have to be married to have children. That's really stupid. I think my uncle must have told me that. I suppose it didn't matter one way or the other, getting married or not getting married. California is hard on married people. It's tough to be married here because life is pretty loose. Young couples together have to have something in common, something they're working at, something in their relationship other than just looking at each other's eyes. Because it's not going to last that long.

PF: Do you still have the faith to keep searching for that one perfect person?

BD: Oh, I keep looking for that person.

PF: What must she have?

BD: She's got to have me inside her. I've got to look into her and see me.

PF: Isn't that a little narcissistic?

BD: **Yeah!** (laughs) **But you asked me, so I told you. Or else she's got to be the opposite of me. But I believe we can find that person if we know ourselves real well. Ah, I don't know, I'd settle for someone who could just sew my pants right now.**

PF: I imagine many women would like to become involved with you. Is that a problem?

BD: **You mean loves? Well, I'm not too successful in that area so I pretty much just keep the friends I've got. I tend not to mess around too much.**

PF: How do you see yourself as having changed from those times when you burst onto the scene with *The Times They Are A-Changin'*?

BD: **Well, we change but stay the same. We always go 'round but come back to the same place. We don't change as much as we are bombarded by feelings along the way and those feelings make us become what we are.**

PF: And what are you now?

BD: **Me? What am I? I'm just a musician... a writer of songs that I sing. That's all I can really do. I do that, just that, real good. That's all I do and all I really want to do, and I'll make a movie now and then. I'm not politically inclined. My talent isn't in that area; it's just to play music. As it is, it falls into areas where people are politically motivated, but who cares? Like *Blowin' In The Wind* was just a feeling I felt because I felt that way.**

PF: Is that why you seemed so reticent to get involved with the people in the American anti-war movement?

BD: **No, no. I knew a lot of those people but I also know a lot of lesbians. They're not going to ask me to join a lot of campaigns just because I wrote *Just Like A Woman*.**

PF: One of your songs that most affected me went, "*My friends in the prison, they ask unto me...*

BD: ***...how good, how good does it feel to be free...***

PF: (together with Bob)

BD: ***...and I answer them most mysteriously, like a bird free from the skyway*." The whole world is a prison. Life is a prison, we're all inside the body. Freedom only comes from knowledge and knowledge is power. So just because you're out there in the desert, facing an endless sky and an unknown nothingness, doesn't necessarily mean you're free. You're trapped on the desert. Only knowledge of either yourself or the ultimate power can get you out of it. I don't know that much.**

PF: Who do you read to find out?

BD: **People I read? Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Henry Miller, Joseph Conrad and Melville.**

PF: In your film, you were walking through a graveyard with Allen Ginsberg, talking about different artists' gravestones. You saw a gravestone that said only the word "Husband" and you said, "I want an unmarked grave". Why did you say that?

BD: **Well, these are things that Renaldo knows...**

PF: You are being evasive.

BD: (laughs) **Why an unmarked grave? What is a gravestone anyway except the supreme ego trip, isn't it really? Husband is a role that we play in this life and the movie has to do with roles that people play. So in that scene we had the father** (Ginsberg) **talking in some subliminal dream to a man who really is and isn't there, whose voice you hear although you're not sure if it is Renaldo or isn't Renaldo. So, you see, it's like a cubist painting, like you see all of it. I can see you but I can't see your back. What if I wanted to see your back and your front, all that together? That's what I was trying to do. So in order to perceive it all, you have to perceive first of all, "What's in his mind?" You just saw the movie once and thought that it was just a lot of masquerade, but it isn't! Whether it's a failure or not, I don't know. It could be. Maybe the movie just isn't for everybody. Maybe there are only two or three people in the universe who are going to understand what it's about.**

PF: But you didn't make it for two or three people in the universe. After all, it's been reported that you spent over $1. 5 million making it.

BD: No, we didn't spend that much. I don't even know where they got that figure from.

PF: But suffice it to say that you've made one hell of an investment in both time and money...

BD: Yeah, and I think it was worthwhile. I'm not thinking about the money. If the film medium is a true canvas then the film has been worthwhile. If films break down and don't mean anything and don't last well, then...

PF: What is a work of art to you?

BD: Okay, you can stand in front of one of Cezannne's paintings for hours and see things, right? A work of art isn't anything but proof that a man lives to do it, and that while he did time, the universe stopped for him.

PF: I only have those conventions that I'm used to from my past to draw on in understanding your film. I'm not sure where to begin to understand the conventions of your film.

BD: Fortunately you don't have to. Unlike trying to understand Ezra Pound or T.S. Eliot we don't assume that we know something that you don't know. We're not trying to be aloof in the way that I think Pound is. You don't have to know much about the Sixties, you don't have to know that much about Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. These are all things of mythic value and because that's what they are, they only seem to be facts. But to understand this movie you just have to see it.

PF: But when you break with film convention, don't you run the risk that it won't be understood by the majority of the audience?

BD: Look, you're talking about someone who is a master of contriving drama on the screen. You're talking about someone who has studied the art of making a film as someone might study sculpture and know that this is what you do to get this effect. We get our effects in other ways which never were taught to me, which I just discovered. And I would rather do that than go to film school and learn how you make somebody cry, how you make somebody laugh. There are ways to do that.

PF: But you've done that in your songs for years.

BD: That's because I'm closer to music, and because I do laugh and cry. Films, I don't know... I'm not sure of that medium really.

PF: What do you feel you're working toward in your life now?

BD: We die and are reborn in our own lives many times and yet it is always heading out toward the end which is perhaps the beginning. What do we know about life and death? Nothing! Most people are working toward being one with God, trying to find him. They want to be one with the supreme power, they want to go Home, you know. From the minute they're born they want to know what they're doing here. I don't think there's anybody who doesn't feel that way. So we do what we can do while we're here and do the best we can... and that's all we can do. *Renaldo And Clara* is a movie. Once it's done, it's done. It's like my songs; I can't dwell on any one for too long. Once they're done, they're done. This movie, it's done. There will be other movies.

February 1978
Rodney Gilchrist Interview, Los Angeles, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1037-1038.

One of the many interviews in Los Angeles crowded into early 1978, ostensibly to gain publicity for *Renaldo And Clara*. The resultant article by Roderick Gilchrist appeared in England's *Daily Mail* on 27/2/1978.

THE SIXTIES MAN WHO CAN'T UNDERSTAND THE SEVENTIES

In a cavernous converted furniture store in downtown Los Angeles Bob Dylan slumps deep into a brown settee and picks idly at the familiar curly hair. He has the flu. His nose is the colour of a cherry against the snowy face. He sniffles.

"The experiences I've had have been basically the experiences I've felt with the people of my own generation, ya know. I don't really know what younger people think or feel." A helpless shrug of the boney shoulders. He is warming to the memory of the big waves he used to ride.

"I don't know what the seventies are all about, man;" he says finally and after a long period of introspective analysis and nose blowing. **"The only generation I'm in tune with is my own. The '60s were a shattering decade. The same thing happened in the 1860s. It seems to happen in the middle of the century. Now we're in the '70s and it's a period of reconstruction. Nothing new happening, nothing..."**

David Zimmerman, the kid from Minnesota, who became a troubadour spokesman for yesterday's generation with "*Times They Are A-Changin'*" and other heated 45 r.p.m. reflections which so accurately articulated the mood of dissent and independence of adolescents a decade ago. Today, for him there are no more peace marches, no more easy-rider motor-bikes, no more stands against conservative values and the Establishment.

The man who was hailed as some kind of pathfinder to a new society, is 36. A lonely celebrity in fashionable Malibu, rich, confused, depressed over his recent divorce and separation from his four children, and currently pursuing an unusual policy for such a recluse of courting the press to promote his new four-hour film '*Renaldo and Clara*' **"to save on the advertising."** For a man who once wrote '*Propaganda all is phoney,*' there are many who are saying it is the ultimate commercial sell-out. The explosives are being placed under an icon. The fuses all but lit.

He shrugs. The shrug says **"Who cares?"** Someone asks Dylan what he thinks of rock and roll today. He says: **"There's no rock and roll. It's an imitation. I never did do rock and roll. The Beatles and the Stones weren't rock and roll. It ended with Little Anthony and the Imperials."**

Oh, yes, Dylan is in fine cynical form. The conversation turns to his new film, a curious Felliniesque confection of his 1975 tour through the U.S.A. 'Rolling Thunder' and a fantasy scenario in which the musicians impersonate pilgrims and cowboys, gypsies and hookers.

But that is not the unfathomable scene. Throughout the movie Joan Baez, Dylan's celebrated former mistress, wends her way as a mysterious figure by the name of 'Woman in White, ' who appears to be headed for a confrontation with Clara – played by his ex-wife Sara over the affections of Renaldo, who is played by Dylan. Whether the film was an attempt to win back

his wife or some strange confirmation of his new single state he won't say. For a man with a rare talent to create truth and color with his music he seems almost illiterate when denied his guitar through which to make his statements. The cleverly projected image of cowboy-outlaw-poet seems long redundant.

17 February 1978
Press conference, International Airport Haneda, Tokyo, Japan

Source: *Circulating tape*

All questions are voiced in Japanese, and a Japanese female interpreter puts them in English for Dylan. I have two tapes for the conference, one [5m21s] contains the first 12 Dylan responses and seems to be a clean recording of the beginning of the conference; while the other one [1m18s] is heavily edited and cuts out most of English interpretation of the questions to Dylan. There are, however, two extra comments from Dylan which undoubtedly answer questions asked right after the 12 initial ones.

Ladies and gentlemen, we proudly introduce you to the world famous superstar, Mr Bob Dylan!

Q: I'm sure you are very tired, but we are very welcome to you, very welcome to have you in Japan.
BD: Good.
Q: We haven't had any concerts in the recent two years and what is your motive for holding these concerts in Japan?
BD: What is my motive?
Q: What motivated you to come to Japan?
BD: No motive, just… that's a place we always wanted to come to play.
Q: For the Japanese tour you have rehearsed for about two months—is that right?—do you always do that?
BD: Well… we are always rehearsing. We're rehearsing to record an album. We're always rehearsing. We never stop rehearsing.
Q: Are you going to introduce any new songs in these concerts?
BD: Maybe.
Q: What is the title to the songs?
BD: Oh, various titles, some don't have any titles yet.
Q: At the press interview in Los Angeles you said you were on your new album already…
BD: Uh-huh.
Q: …and that the theme for it is "love". What is your concept for love?
BD: There are different reasons(??)
Q: ??? (dismayed) Is there any difference between your love and the love that Beatles sing, or you're going to sing about love?
BD: Huh?
Q: Is there any difference between their idea of love and your idea?
BD: They might be… of a different point of view.
Q: What are the differences?
BD: My point of view is less abstract than their point of view.
Q: I see… Up till now you used to sing the protesting songs, right? How do they come about for making the theme love this time?
BD: Well, protest songs are really love songs, too. They were my most brilliant love songs.
Q: [Japanese only]
BD: Well, I'm not a god of folk songs.
Q: Then what are you?
BD: I'm just a person.

February 1978
Randy Anderson interview for *The Minnesota Daily*, Santa Monica, California

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An interview with DYLAN by Randy Anderson

After spending half my life living closely with his words and music, I am now face to face with the most important artist of my generation. Bob Dylan shakes my hand weakly, puts down his coffee cup next to mine and bums a Marlboro.

RA: Greetings from the Midwest—it's ten below there. Which coffee cup's mine?

BD: This one's mine, that must be yours.

RA: Mine's starting to curdle... I'm running out of cigarettes.

BD: I just got over the flu. Actually I think I still got the flu.

RA: I heard that... Are you tired of doing this?

BD: Interviews?

RA: Yeah.

BD: (In an encouraging tone of voice) **No, not at all.** (Strains of "*Lay Lady Lay*" in the background.)

RA: ...Would you be interested in talking about your days at the University of Minnesota?

BD: Yeah, sure.

RA: When I talk about those days—and I don't even remember how long they were—what kind of feelings does that conjure up? Good times? Bad times?

BD: Well, I remember people more than events you know. Ah, David Wicker, Hugh Brown, Ernie Washington—you know any of those people?

RA: No, I'm younger than you are—about six years.

BD: Ah, John Koerner—Dave Ray was just getting out of high school.

RA: ...So how long were you in school at the U?

BD: (taking a long drag on cigarette) **I was registered there for about six months** (1960)**. I never did get an academic rating. I registered there for six months and I was there beyond that time. I don't re-member much about it—Scott Hall, Ford Hall.**

RA: What classes did you take?

BD: I took ah,... English. I remember an anthropology course I took, which took place in a big auditorium most of the time. Umm, I think those are the only classes I actually even attended. (smiles)

RA: Was there anything valuable about your academic experience? What turned you off or on?

BD: No, ah nothing... I would hang around mostly at the cafe. What's the name of that place?

RA: The Scholar?

BD: No, no on campus there—

RA: Is it still there?

BD: Yeah, they turned it into an auditorium. I saw because I played there when I got back from New York the first time. You know the *Little Sandy Review* was published in Minneapolis?

RA: Yeah.

BD: And that was just starting up when I was there. So there was that type of general atmosphere and that was the atmosphere that I was only interested in. I didn't much get

interested in any other activity school-wise. I figured after high school my schoolin' days were over.

RA: How was your high school experience?

BD: Ah well, I was playin' music in high school too and I was workin' in high school so (five second pause)—

RA: That must seem like light years away.

BD: (quickly) **It does, it does now.** (with an air of admission) **My mind was always outside the classroom.**

RA: Really?

BD: Yeah, I don't think I was compelled in any way in the classroom.

RA: Never any teachers or professors that meant anything to you?

BD: There were some good ones, some good teachers at Hibbing High. But I had teachers that my mother had so—

RA: They're probably still there! How important is Minnesota, Hibbing and Minneapolis to you?

BD: I feel very comfortable there. And I do get back every so often. I was up in Hibbing a few years ago (six second pause)—

RA: How was that?

BD: (quickly) **Well it hasn't changed. I was glad to see that.** (ten second pause) **You know, like a lot of people go back to their hometown and they find their hometown's been replaced by a supermarket or something.**

RA: When was the last time you saw the West Bank?

BD: Well the West Bank has changed since when I was there. The University has changed a lot, Minneapolis has changed a lot, but Hibbing hasn't.

RA: How has Minneapolis changed?

BD: All the recent development. I think that when I was goin' to school there, there was about 20,000 students, maybe 25,000. I don't know how many there are now but I think it's much more.

RA: Maybe 50,000.

BD: 50,000? So, there wasn't any development on the West bank. There was that Seven Corners area where it was undeveloped. It was like London or New York or the Soho district. But I see they've taken all that and developed it and made it into dormitories or ah—

RA: Highrise apartments.

BD: Yes. There wasn't any of that there when I was there. It had a different look to it and a whole different feel. They didn't have any of that stuff when I was there, it was just old, old houses.

RA: When you were there, were you already making plans to go to New York?

BD: Yeah, I had made plans to go to New York. Most of the people were leaving anyway. And I had done about as much as I could there in Minneapolis. I went to Chicago first and stayed there. Then I went up to Wisconsin, which was more or less the same general scene as it was at the school in Minnesota. And from there I went to New York. That was quite a trip... another guitar player and myself got a ride with a young couple from the campus whose parents were from Brooklyn. They were goin' there and wanted some more drivers, so we just drove.

RA: So what does it feel like when you go back to Minnesota and—

BD: Well, it feels the same. I relax more there than I do out here or anywhere else.

RA: Do you like LA—Malibu?

BD: I don't think in terms of liking it, I think of it in terms of a place I have to be. Now I have to be here because it is centrally located to what I'm doing.

We are sitting in a stark room in a reconverted furniture factory that Dylan has rented as a rehearsal hall. He's working hard at whipping a new band into shape for his upcoming tour of Japan and Australia. Throughout the interview the band can be heard jamming upstairs.

It's a rainy day in Santa Monica, California. Earlier, I had rendezvoused with Paul Wasserman, Dylan's press agent, at his Beverly Hills offices. Together we drove down to the rehearsal hall, chatting amiably about—among other things—Dylan, the interview, the movie *Renaldo and Clara*. (It's been reported that after Dylan screened his long, cryptic movie for Wasserman—the man he had picked to launch the publicity campaign—Dylan said, **"It's not *Star Wars*, is it Paul?"**).

During our engaging conversations, Wasserman tells me that Dylan felt he was burning himself out with these interviews, that he was having trouble coming up with new answers and that he was repeating himself.

"I told him not to worry about it, that it would add to the mystique," Wasserman says. "He didn't find that too humorous."

After the interview, as we walked toward his car in a torrential downpour. Wasserman asks me, "Was he mystical?" I replied in the negative.

But that mystical stuff can get to you when you're sitting in this room alone for an hour and a half waiting for the man to appear. Wasserman, a very kind and considerate man (contrary to reports), keeps bringing me coffee and at one point apologizes for Dylan's lateness (it seems he's stopped off at the doctor's on the way in from his much-publicized, copper-domed Xanadu in Malibu). Band members, sound men and security guys come in and out, by and large a friendly bunch. One of them leans over to me and says, "This waiting—I think it's part of the technique."

The waiting does give me chance to drink in the environment, to get relaxed. I make a list of everything in the room: two non-descript beige couches: a big color TV; a grade school-level mural painting of a rainbow (red, yellow and green), some clouds and some birds; two huge speakers; two closed circuit TVs; a huge sound board behind me; and on top of a coffee table, a *TV Guide*, a white painter's hat, and a list of something. I lean over to check out the list—it's a list of songs: "*Tambourine Man*," "*Like a Rolling Stone*," "*Positively 4th Street*," "*Ballad of a Thin Man*" and on and on—I couldn't look anymore. It was the one thing in the room that seemed to be a grim reminder of the enormity of Dylan's contribution. I manage to avoid looking at it for the remainder of my wait, turning around to stare at the mixing board behind me and at a crazy drawing in orange, purple and green chalk on a blackboard behind that. I decide to kill time by sketching it:

X

I look closely at the smudged caption and it looks something like, "Another Self-Portrait." I chuckle to myself and hope that, yes indeed, there is some levity among these people.

I continue staring at the gray concrete floor and suddenly there's a noise, somebody walks in and plops down on the other couch. I look up and it's Dylan, unshaven and looking scruffy as usual (still "*the unwashed phenomenon, the original vagabond*," that strayed into Joan Baez' heart) with a Big Apple hat pulled over his riotous black locks. He's wearing a black leather jacket, an off-white collarless shirt, blue jeans and a pair of white, California penny loafers. We exchange nervous pleasantries and begin to talk about Minnesota.

As we talk, I notice that Dylan has many different rhythms to his speech—depending on how interested he is in the topic or how sure he is of what he's saying. Sometimes, he talks in a New York, street-jive style, sometimes in our bland Midwestern style and at other times, in a curious Southern drawl. He has a habit of taking long pauses when he's conversing with someone, something I'd luckily picked up beforehand in reading what others had said. Also, I knew he had once written: "experience teaches that silence terrifies people the most," I decide to gut those silences out, and soon I find he doesn't do it to offend anyone or to appear spacy, but to think, consider his words, or to show that he has nothing to say at the moment. He leans

forward and talks faster when he's interested or has got something prefabricated to relate. And, he's obviously in shape to talk about *Renaldo and Clara*.

RA: How important is spontaneity to your art?

BD: Well, the movie wasn't spontaneous. It might seem that way cuz it was so natural. But it wasn't a spontaneous movie at all. People like to think it was because some of it's improvised. But not really, it wasn't a spontaneous movie in the sense that people go out and do anything they want to do and that will find its way into the movie. It was outlined by fact.

RA: You put things down on paper.

BD: Hmmm—well, it seems so natural that people think that—well, it must be spontaneous.

RA: That's really hard to do though.

BD: Yeah it is hard to do.

RA: What were some of your techniques?

BD: You just have to get that drama out of people. You have to have control and you have to know what it is you're doing, want to do and what the end result will be and you can make it happen like that. Personally, I would rather see it happen like that. Your best actors are people who, when you're lookin' at 'em, you do think that they're acting spontaneously. (begins to slip into his street jive manner, sounding very sure and slightly defiant) You see Jack Nicholson in a movie—I mean you never think he's acting. You think he's thinkin' of them lines right at the time he's sayin' 'em.

RA: There were a lot of people who were not known as actors before who were able to pull that off.

BD: There were. Well, it's in everyone, everyone wants to act you know.

RA: How do you mean?

BD: Well, given the opportunity, people do want to act out a role other than themselves.

RA: Do you share that interest? Or, are you more interested in the directing end of it?

BD: To a certain degree, but I'm more related to the music.

RA: Do you find it's difficult to put words to a piece of art like the film? Would you rather have the music and visual images speak for themselves?

BD: Oh yeah, yeah, that's my preference. My preference isn't to talk about the film because it isn't explainable. Either it works for you or it doesn't work for you. And if it doesn't work for you, me explaining it isn't going to make it work for you.

RA: Exactly. Reading between the lines of some of the articles written about *Renaldo and Clara,* one gets the idea that the movie's inaccessible. But it's not—though it is inexplicable. Saying that it is can turn people off.

BD: It isn't an inaccessible movie, it isn't at all. It's a very simple movie to follow. It's inaccessible to people who are burdened down with their own logic, who have preconceived ideas. Those people aren't going to let themselves be affected by what they're seeing.

RA: Who do you think the audience is for the movie?

BD: Anybody who's been through any of those things at all is going to be a receptive audience for that movie. Anybody who's been through that struggle.

RA: What struggle?

BD: That alter-ego struggle against the subconscious which is always going through there. But we don't like to call it that or say that because it's an awful big undertaking. But that's exactly what is happening in that movie. It's the subconscious mind against the alter-ego in that movie. Something is wishing to become something else. Whether it's possible or whether it succeeds, we don't know that. The movie doesn't provide any answers. But nothing provides any answers—*War and Peace* doesn't provide any answers.

RA: But that's what people want, especially American moviegoers. They want simplicity, they want everything explained, they want that storyline.

BD: It doesn't have any of that.

RA: Europeans are more used to films as opposed to movies. Most Americans go to movies, to be entertained. *Renaldo and Clara* is a film and you don't necessarily go to it to be entertained.

BD: Well, my songs aren't explainable either. And there shouldn't be any reason why this movie or this film, should be any different than a song I feel close to.

RA: Have you ever met Keith Jarrett?

BD: Yeah, I think so.

RA: I talked to him awhile back about popular music and he claimed that virtually all popular music is a waste of time, because if the words are good enough people aren't going to pay attention to the music, and if the music's good enough it doesn't need any words.

BD: I don't find that true.

RA: We went on about this, and he finally brought up your name, saying that you were the only person who is able to pull that off—mixing words and music. And of course, he has done some of your tunes on his early records.

BD: That's probably because subconsciously I'm aware of both as being equal. I'm always aware of that fact. I can't write something where the music is heavier or more loaded than the lyric or the lyric is more loaded than the music. It would just be something I couldn't do. That's why some of the tunes that have an emotional quality, an intense emotional quality, will have a very simple melody—a folk melody.

RA: Most of what happened to me as a moviegoer during *Renaldo and Clara* was in the realm of feeling. Sometimes I was depressed, sometimes I was exhilarated, at times my mind wandered—the times my mind wandered made the intense scenes that much more powerful by contrast—but comparing emotional notes with the person I saw the movie with, well, both of us felt very sad after the movie. Do you think that's a strange reaction?

BD: No, no, not at all. There's a lot of sadness that develops in that movie. A lot of dead ends. But the overall picture shouldn't be one of sadness, it should be one of—what's the word?—it should be one of resolve. It is resolved. But you're—there is a great deal of sadness in it, but it doesn't leave you sad—

RA: I don't follow you.

BD: —but it could though. Well, it leaves you at the end with an out—because it is the morning of this man's life.

RA: Yeah.

BD: No matter what he's gone through, no matter who he knows, no matter what's been done to him, it still is the morning.

RA: Hope?

BD: Hope, yeah. So, although there is a great deal of sadness that develops, it is conceivable that the sadness will be broken after the movie ends.

RA: If I said there was a lack of humor and lightness in *Renaldo and Clara* would that strike you as wrong?

BD: No, no. Ummm...

RA: Every once in a while I wished for something to break the tension cuz I was concentrating so hard. Sometimes the music did that.

BD: Uh-huh. That's just the nature of the film to be that way. It is intense. There is no out.

RA: I think that's where the depression comes in, at least my feelings of it. I was very moved by parts of the film, but I'm wondering whether the mass audience will...

BD: Well, we don't know if the mass audiences will, but it's not really for a mass audience. The mass audience doesn't go for my music either. So there's no real reason why it should have to appeal to a mass audience to be successful.

RA: But you still have to sell a lot of tickets.

BD: You do have to sell tickets—

RA: And that's probably why we're doing the interview in the first place—to help out the film.

BD: I'm hopin' we would help out the film, so people know that there's a film to see. But we can't explain the film. There's no way we can do that.

RA: But do you see what I mean? There's a problem here. It's the old money and art problem I guess—a cliché but it's very real.

BD: It is yeah. Well, we just do the best we can and that's all we can do you know—we can try.

RA: Do you read any of the articles written about the film? You're old enough now, maybe that stuff doesn't affect you anymore.

BD: Personally, I don't believe that critical acclaim or denunciation is going to affect the movie one way or another. I think it's the people who see the movie which will decide for themselves whether they want their friends to see it.

RA: So the jury is still out as far as you're concerned?

BD: Well, there really isn't a *jury*——

RA: Well, there's a critical consensus from the masses or the people.

BD: (six second pause) **Well, I think in 20 years we'll see. If that movie's still playin' in 20 years, well then I guess it'll have something to say that's speaking to the people. If it isn't, well then it just didn't reach enough people.**

RA: I'm glad you brought that up, because another feeling I had was that the film had an aura of timelessness to it.... Do you think in 20, 50 or 100 years, people will say *Renaldo and Clara* was "the '60s" or "the '70s"—like *Saturday Night Fever* is in the '70s—or will they say that it's a real timeless movie, that you just can't place it.

BD: Yeah, it's a timeless movie. There's nothing that locks that movie into any age.

RA: Except maybe the '60s a little bit.

BD: Well, there's a sign on a theater up in Harlem, showin' *Earthquake*—

RA: You mean the Apollo Theater-scope.

BD: Yeah, so that'll date it if you want to get that specific.

RA: Speaking of the Apollo Theater, you once wrote: "*the fact that the white house is filled with leaders that've never been to the apollo theater amazes me.*" (from the jacket notes to *Bringing It All Back Home*) Which made me think that this film has been simmering on your backburners for a few years and that you picked out scenes like the Apollo Theater that mean something to you.

BD: Yeah, this film—this is the right time for this film. I couldn't have made it before, but I've been thinkin' about it.

RA: For a long period of time?

BD: Off and on, yeah.

RA: ...You've been up to the Apollo Theater in Harlem haven't you?

BD: Yeah, I used to go there on Monday nights a lot.

RA: You can't do that anymore can you?

BD: Oh, well, I've never had any trouble walking around in neighborhoods.

RA: Think black people would be interested in the film?

BD: In this film?

RA: Yeah.

BD: (sincerely) **I really don't know. It's a truthful film. And we're not lookin' at people as either black or white. It's an experience beneath the mind, it's—I don't think you have to be any certain color to relate to the film.**

RA: But one of the things that you pick up in your film or your art is a great sensitivity and love for minorities and the disadvantaged.

BD: Well, it's not that so much as a love for truth. Ah, I don't love black or green or white or blue or whatever happens to be the color of different people. But in a search for truth you find different elements that happen to be involved with how certain people treat other people—economically, socially or personally.

RA: The quest for truth brings to mind *Moby Dick*—ever read it?

BD: Yeah.

RA: ...Melville's book wasn't appreciated until long after he was dead—people never really read it until the 1920s.

BD: Right.

RA: Did you ever think *Renaldo and Clara* might be something like that?

BD: Probably. It probably is.

RA: You might not even be around to see it appreciated.

BD: I could believe that. Sure. Joseph Conrad wasn't appreciated either in his time. Look at Van Gogh, I mean he couldn't even sell a painting to eat.

RA: Does that bother you?

BD: Well, yeah, in a work like this it does. Because you know, you can't expect people to go out there and accept it the way they would the Mona Lisa. People lookin' at the Mona Lisa—they might just say, "Well, it's a picture of a woman with a smile." You know, that's all they might see. And in this movie too, they might go to it and say, "Well, it's a movie about Bob Dylan and Joan Baez." And that's all they might see. I understand that that's where people are comin' from. But still I've got a belief that you have to do whatever it is that you're doing. You can't compromise with the fact that you must do what you must do.

RA: Compromise is an anathema to being an artist?

BD: Uh-huh. Yeah, the artists that are really successful, that make platinum records and that are makin' movies and all that—I mean they're compromisin' a whole lot. I mean they're just calculatin' what the audience will want.

RA: Is there any value at all in any of that stuff?

BD: I don't look at those people as true artists.

RA: Just production people—

BD: No, they're just intelligent people who can get it together to superficially satisfy a lot of people.

RA: That seems to be what a lot of Americans are after—fast food, MacDonald's hamburgers—

BD: Yeah, yeah.

RA: —and a record is just like a hamburger, just consume it and it's over.

BD: Yeah.

RA: Do you find yourself alienated from the average, common person, leading the life that you do?

BD: Maybe so, maybe so. I don't know. I never eat in restaurants. I won't eat in one. Once in a while I will, but as a rule I won't eat in a restaurant. I don't go places most people go to ah—

RA: But as an artist don't we have to keep in touch with the people, the country, the earth—

BD: Sure, sure we do.

RA: So how do you do that? One has to, otherwise we become solipsistic—

BD: Otherwise we go into a monastery. No, I'm not livin' in a monastery. I'm out and about in the world, and I just come in contact with where people are and what their feelings are and from that I create the artistic experience—plus my own feelings and instinct that I have myself, I use that and sometimes it seems like there isn't enough time to go and be where you wanna be.

RA: See. in other ages artists could live among the people, and be of the people.

BD: Well, look at Baudelaire or Lord Byron. They could write a monumental work sittin' in a café, you know.

RA: Doesn't that bother you as a limitation—

BD: Yeah, but that's the environment in this country. You can't really do that. You're reality is broken up by plastic and it affects you. And if you don't want that plastic in your work you'll have to go elsewhere. So it's a continual search to find what's real. What's real and what's more organic in a way.

RA: One of my favorite poets is Walt Whitman and of course he was able to walk among the streets of Brooklyn and embrace the people.

BD: Allen Ginsberg does that to a certain degree.

RA: He can get away with that.

BD: Yeah, he can get away with that. Me, I'm not that type of poet, because I play music. And I have to play that on the stage. So when you're playin' on the stage it's a—you're of the people but you're not of the people.

RA: (making a gesture) There's a—

BD: No, there really isn't a wall there. It's all the same room. But, you really sometimes have to hole up to gain that inspiration.

Only time will tell if *Renaldo and Clara* is Dylan's *Moby Dick* or a self-important, artistic white elephant. On a peaceful California evening, I saw the film at the Regent Theatre in Westwood near the UCLA campus. For four dollars you get four hours plus of film, one hour of which is devoted to concert footage from the Rolling Thunder tour of 1976. (Dylan edited down 100 hours of film to four hours—and I'm sure the A. J. Webermans of the world would kill to see the 96 hours that ended up on the cutting room floor.)

The musical interludes are arguably the best scenes in the film. Dylan's rendering of "*Isis*" is riveting (it drew a smattering of applause in Westwood)—as is "*One More Cup of Coffee*" and "*Sara*." The whole group of gypsies do righteous versions of Curtis Mayfield's "*People Get Ready*" (as Dylan's entourage tours an Indian gathering) and Dylan's "*Knockin' on Heaven's Door*." As much as I dislike her, Joan Baez did raise goosebumps with "*Diamonds and Rust*," her transparent ode to Bob. But then she embarrasses herself with a non-seductive, flailing dance onstage while Roger McGuinn leads the band through "*Eight Miles High*." McGuinn follows that with a fine vocal on "*Chestnut Mare*." There are a lot of close-ups in the concert footage and all the performers come off as dedicated and intense throughout.

The three hours given over to improvised vignettes, broken and recurrent storylines and semi-documentary inserts would definitely make the movie tedious and cumbersome to a non-fan. Following Warhol's lead, Dylan lets the cameras roll on, waiting for special moments. The obligatory, Felliniesque bordello scenes which keep cropping up are questionable in their relevancy. So are the snippets of Ginsberg reading "*Kaddish*" to a confused bunch of Jewish matrons at some naugahyde nightclub. However, Sara Dylan is an interesting onscreen figure—still beautiful despite being in her upper thirties and having born five children and despite the fact she takes to wearing a hideous wig halfway through the movie.

Ronnie Hawkins, the big old rockabilly singer the Band backed up in their early days and who ostensibly plays "Bob Dylan" in the movie, does a good job in an improvised scene in which he tries to lure a farmer's daughter into joining him on the road—memorable quote: "*Rock and roll's the answer—live fast, love hard and die young.*" The freeze-frame, street interviews with blacks on the Hurricane Carter issue are also affecting.

The film was shot down the line of the Rolling Thunder tour on the East Coast: New York, Cape Cod, Maine, with a sidetrip up to Quebec City. The film has an annoying randomness to it, with one attempt made at making it cohere: a sort of *ad hoc*, rambling narrative by David Blue who functions as Boswell to Dylan's Johnson, remembering things past as he plays a losing game of pinball poolside in some Cape Cod motel. Some of it's very funny.

Many of the characters (who seem to interchange roles as the movie rolls along) wear makeup. Dylan himself starts out the movie by singing "*When I Paint My Masterpiece*" onstage with a plastic, transparent mask on. Indeed, in watching the movie, it's confusing as to which was more important—the mask or what was behind the mask. *Renaldo and Clara* is also vaguely and hesitatingly autobiographical—the final scene of the Woman in White (Joan Baez) interrupting the love-making of Dylan and Sara is undeniably a contorted attempt to come to terms with the frighteningly fuzzy line between myth and reality that obtains in the movie. Still, it's a fascinating albeit somewhat false contretemps.

By the time I talked to Dylan, the critics had pretty much lambasted *Renaldo and Clara*. For most, figuratively and literally, it was a pain in the ass (with only a 100 millimeter cigarette intermission to ease the ache). It's not like eating at MacDonald's. It's as if Dylan had made a huge, four-sided album that, condensed down, would have made a great double album. Still, for four dollars—if you can dismiss what critics have said about Dylan's self-indulgence and supposed Messianic complex—it's worth it. Just allow yourself to be dragged into the dreamy momentum of a long, late-night flight.

Sensing the non-commercial nature of *Renaldo and Clara*, Dylan had Wasserman (the publicity man in entertainment, he also has handled the likes of the Rolling Stones, Linda Ronstadt, Paul Simon and James Taylor) to set up interviews to plug the movie, in hopes of salvaging some of the 1,25 million dollars he sunk into it.

RA: ...an interviewer sometimes feels like a thief when he interviews someone—

BD: Heh! Heh!

RA: It's like the old African tribesmen who feel like you're stealing part of their soul when you take a picture of them. Like I get people to talk and then I get it on tape and take it home and show it to the public. That make any sense to you?

BD: Oh yeah. I agree with that picture-taking thing. You gotta have a protective layer around ya to have your picture taken. And, I feel the same exact way as those old tribesmen, about havin' your picture taken. I don't believe it's really proper, to do that to somebody else.

RA: I really don't either and that's why sometimes I feel morally against interviews as verbal pictures—although it's my job. How do you approach an interview given that you feel like that?

BD: How do I do an interview?

RA: Yeah, you're obviously aware that that's my job.

BD: Yeah, I've just become accustomed to that. I used to do interviews in the old days so I know what they are. I haven't done 'em in a long time cuz I really had nuthin' to do an interview about. I didn't figger what I was doin' was that interesting. So now we're doin' interviews and why? I couldn't really say for sure. But it seemed like a good idea cuz of this movie, so whatever you wanna know I'm gonna try to tell ya.

RA: ...I once saw the movie *Don't Look Back*. As an interviewer there's no way I can purge that from my mind when I come to talk with you and when I'm waiting here for you to come in. How you are now is totally different from the bullshit that's been passed down to us over the years.

BD: Yeah, a lot has changed though since those days. People in those days—that was the establishment press we were talking to. They didn't understand what was goin' on in the musical arena. But nowadays, I've found from doin' these interviews that there's a lot of people who do understand what I've been doin', so it isn't that difficult because people relate to me on that level where before people were relating to me—"What's this phenomenon that's being created?"; "What does that song mean?"—they would just coldly ask me these things. How was I to explain to them what the song meant? They should have asked the crowd. They should have asked the audience what the songs meant. And they never do. They never talk to my audience. They always wanna hear it from me or else they make up their own mind and they tend to disregard all the people that do find something worthwhile in my work.

RA: Have most of these interviews been enjoyable?

BD: I've found them to be interesting because I get a sense of what people are thinkin' of the movie when they see it. Some people say, "Gee, I saw it and I didn't understand it." Or some other people say, "I saw it and I understood a lot of it and didn't understand some of it." And some people say, "I thought it was—you know, brilliant." People react in different ways, and they usually say that right off.

RA: What's been the breakdown pro and con?

BD: Very mixed. Very, very mixed. If you really wanna know what the people are thinkin' you should just go to the movie theater and ask the people when they're comin' out. That's the way you're gonna find out what people are thinkin' of this movie cuz I can't tell you what anybody's thinkin' of this movie. And you can't tell me, you know.

RA: As a 36-year-old artist do you still suffer from insecurity in regard to your work? A lot of people think, "He's gone through it all, he probably doesn't care what we say about him anyway." Or, do you find that insecurity is a permanent part of existence no matter who you are.

BD: Yeah, insecurity in the area of being able to write and perform. (ten second pause) I had that for a while... Yeah, around like '72, '73. I wasn't sure what I was gonna do and didn't really feel much like singin' and playin' or writing. But nowadays... if you have belief then you won't be insecure.

RA: Faith—in yourself and in your work?

BD: Yeah.

RA: Yet faith in yourself is something that goes up and down isn't it?

BD: That's right... you want some more cigarettes?

RA: Yeah, I'd love some.

BD: Lemme go get some.

RA: How much more time we got Bob?

BD: Well, let's just talk and see.

Tape off. Dylan returns; upstairs, the band plays on—sounds vaguely like the Allman's "*Mountain Jam*."

RA: Say, did you have any misgivings about granting us an interview? I mean... we're not exactly *Rolling Stone* or *Playboy*.

BD: No I really didn't. Not at all.

Dylan had talked to several people by the time *A&E* got an interview. In reading some of the interviews, I got the impression that he would be arrogant and unfriendly. (For *Playboy*, he didn't take his sunglasses off for days.) At the very least, I expected an encounter with the Jack of Hearts—that archetypal rascal, master of ambiguity. Yet already, one unforgettable thing about the interview is how friendly, how human he seems. Perhaps it's part of the demythologizing process. He isn't necessarily helpful to an interviewer (in fact he's a bit lazy in answering questions, and definitely considers interviews work) but he does, in subtle ways, make you feel relaxed. Invariably, a good stretch of music from his band upstairs distracts him a little, causing him to tap his feet. Essentially though, he's a very restless person—like an energetic youth in a boring math class.

Nonetheless, he's undeniably charismatic. His eyes are most memorable—steel blue to some, "bluer than robins' eggs" to Joan Baez ("*Diamonds and Rust*"). They dart, dance and fix, attesting to an inner intensity when his voice falls silent. More than anything, they remind you that you're not talking to any "regular guy"—the man was not destined for anonymity.

RA: Did you ever read *The Great Gatsby*? (Young man leaves Minnesota, changes name and. answering the "drum of destiny," becomes a mysterious, famous figure in New York)

BD: Yeah, I read it in high school, but I couldn't tell you anything about it though.

RA: Did you have a dream you wanted to live out like Gatsby?

BD: No, not exactly that, because I always played the guitar. It was always directed toward the music I was playing.

RA: ...Do you feel you have a public persona that functions as a mask for you that you can fall back on?

BD: No, I don't feel I have that persona to fall back on. I don't consider myself in the public eye. I'm in the public eye superficially but I don't consider myself being a public personality.

RA: I guess what I'm talking about is the Dylan myth, the one that you're making us confront somewhat in *Renaldo and Clara*.

BD: There's no myth for me to fall back on. It's ah... whoever said there was a myth? *Time* magazine or *Newsweek* magazine might have said there was a myth.

RA: Exactly. But that's something that you have to live with, that becomes part of your life that I don't have to live with...

BD: But I don't feel I'm in any danger because I've never believed it.

RA: But that's a struggle that you have that most people don't have. It's a struggle against what people are doing with your life.

BD: Yeah—

RA: What's that like?

BD: Well, sometimes, at different times you confront people who can't see you. I've met a lot of them. They can't see you. They're only seeing the myth, or whatever they're choosing to see.

RA: What do you do with a person like that?—give 'em the myth or say to hell with 'em and don't deal with 'em?

BD: Those incidents don't usually last a great deal of time—they don't usually last too long. But I know what you mean because I've experienced it.

RA: What I'm basically getting at is that those occurrences aren't everyday occurrences for everyday people. I would imagine the myth's a burden—maybe it isn't.

BD: Well, a myth is a story, a myth isn't a person necessarily. A myth is a happening. We think of things in mythological terms: the myth of the younger sister, the myth of the false bride, the myth of the two brothers, the myth of the king and queen. We think of those stories and involvements as myths. Singular people we can't really consider as being myths, although we can. We have the myth of Robin Hood—

RA: That's more like a legend.

BD: A legend yeah. Legendary is for singular people. But mythological isn't. I think people have just got the wrong terminology when they think of me in terms of myth.

RA: But just because of the way the country is set up, it has a way of making living people seem larger than life. And maybe some people have an inner need to have heroes.

BD: Maybe so but ah... (ten second pause) **legendary is something that happens after we die or after we're gone. So like if we experience a lot of different changes in this life you can become legendary, meaning that something you did yesterday you're not doing anymore.**

RA: When the history of the 20th century is written, how would you like to be remembered?... The reason I bring it up is because of that scene in the movie when you and Ginsberg are standing by Kerouac's grave—or don't those things concern you?

BD: No, it doesn't really concern me —how I'm going to be remembered.

RA: But to get involved with art on such a grandiose scale there has to be an ego involved.

BD: You're concerned with being remembered by your children... and your neighbors. (ten second pause) **In those terms, I'd like to be remembered as doing the best I could—for them and for myself.**

RA: How important are your children in your life?—or is that an unfair question? (Dylan is recently divorced and for the past year has been playing a painful game of tug-'o-war with his wife over the children)

BD: No, it's not an unfair question (12 second pause)**.**

RA: In other words, what fulfillment do they give you that art can't give you? Is it an extra dimension?

BD: (ten second pause, and then he speaks softly and poignantly) **Yeah, it's maybe the only dimension that really counts. We're all playin' games with this art business you know.**

But in reality it's a—we have to be able to, we have to be willing to be a fulfilled human being.

RA: Did you figure that out of an early age or was there a time when you thought of yourself as a permanent single person, traveling light and fast... or did you always want children?

BD: Well, that's just a belief in life. At a certain point, you must decide whether you want to sacrifice your ideas for something which may have more value. Sacrifice your ideas for something which has more value in terms of flesh and blood. You just are either orientated that way or you're not.

RA: You don't think all people are oriented that way?

BD: I don't think of all people as being fulfilled the same way.

RA: ...I find I constantly change my attitude about something I've done. Do you have that problem with the film? The film is forever, a song you can redo onstage every time you sing it.

BD: No, the film's gotta stand because it's too involved, it's more involved than a song, it's gotta stand. Sure we coulda made it better, embellished it a bit. But I don't have any regrets about what it is.

RA: A favorite song of mine is Edith Piaf's "*I Have No Regrets*." Do you believe in regrets?

BD: No, regrets just keep you chained to the past. You gotta make peace with the past. There's no reason to regret it. You've done it, just make peace with it.

RA: Are you at peace with your past?

BD: I am, yeah. I try to be, yeah. I always try to keep my past and my present and my future all on the same level.

RA: What's next? You're obviously going on tour, you're rehearsing a new band—

BD: Yeah, that's basically, that's mainly what I do, write songs and tour and record. Making movies is somethin' which I'll be interested in doing and when we do it, if we can do it within the boundaries of the music...

RA: What do you do in your spare time?

BD: I don't have any spare time.

RA: What about in '72 and '73 when you said you weren't doin' anything?

BD: Yeah, when I have—in my spare time I probably like to go back to Minnesota... and just let everything else drift away.

RA: What do you do when you go back there?

BD: Ah...

RA: You gotta piece of land back home don't ya?

BD: Yeah, ah... (the music from upstairs is infectious)

RA: Do you just hang out, see friends and commune?

BD: Yeah, yeah. I just get to go for, you know, short periods of time.

RA: You can't tell me specifically what you do in that spare time?

BD: Well...

RA: Other interests besides writing or reading or playing music?

BD: Oh! ah... you just mean what do I like to do?

RA: Yeah.

BD: I like to blast sculpture out of metal.

RA: Really?

BD: Yeah, and I also like to go roller skating or ice skating or go fishing or...

RA: You go fishing in Minnesota?

BD: Yeah sometimes.

RA: I get the feeling you're ready to play.

BD: I think I am.

RA: I think you are.

BD: Yeah. Heh! heh!

RA: I really enjoyed it.

BD: Okay. I hope you got somethin' you can use.

We shake hands and say goodbye. Waiting in the lobby for Wasserman, I spy a soaked wet figure hunched over in the rain outside. He looks very European in dress and has a guitar case, a tape recorder and some books. He keeps scribbling out notes, then tapping on the locked, glass door and giving the scraps of paper to Dylan's security man. It seems he wants to play with Dylan and has made a long pilgrimage in hopes of auditioning for his hero. The security guy tells me it happens a lot. I ask if that sort of thing depresses everybody and he says, "Yes, it does... if they only knew how it really is." The hard rain keep falling as Wasserman and I depart. For several hours I kept thinking of that forlorn musician. It just didn't seem fair.

February 1978
Jeffrey Morgan "Interview", Osaka, Japan

Source: *Creem*, July 1979 issue

CREEM—July 1979
by Machine Rock

OSAKA, JAPAN The Guinness Book Of World Records has officially given credit for the world's shortest (no pun intended) Bob Dylan interview to CREEM regular Jeffrey Morgan for the following exchange between Dylan (on stage during a recent concert) and Morgan (who was sitting in the front row at the time):

BD: This next number is a song I once did with the Band. You remember the Band, don't you? It was on an album called Planet Waves. It sold twelve copies.
JM: WHY?
BD: Get this guy outta here.

Even though he missed the rest of the concert, Morgan later called the exchange "a great rock n' roll moment. Almost as good as the time I asked Lou Reed if he was scared of death."

Dylan was unavailable for comment.

January 1978
Barbara Kerr Interview with Bob Dylan

as reprinted in "On The Tracks" Vol 8, No 1 (OTT 18) Display until April 30, 2000, pp. 8-12.

Boston Herald's 1978 interview with
Bob Dylan
by Barbara Kerr

The Boston Herald's March 1978 headlines read:

"'Recluse' [Bob Dylan] talks freely of his music, family and home: One of America's most private superstars has finally 'gone public' Bob Dylan, who for years carefully nurtured his status as a recluse, talked with Barbara Kerr of the Chicago Daily News, on the occasion of the release of his new movie Renaldo and Clara, now playing locally at the Galeria in Cambridge."

At 36, Bob Dylan has been a central figure in contemporary music for almost 15 years.

Erupting out of the Greenwich Village folk/protest tradition of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger in the early '60s, he went on to electrify both his guitar and a generation which knew, as he said in the title of one of his songs, "that the times are a changin'."

He rejuvenated the folk tradition with songs like "*Blowin' In The Wind*," fused it with the angriest of rock and roll in "*Maggie's Farm*" and, for good measure, overlaid it with the wry warning that even "*A Rolling Stone*" eventually had to come to rest.

Later, when the tempest of the '60s subsided, there was a mellower, more reflective Dylan, home with family and friends, "*Watching The River Flow*."

And after life got too laid-back, there was Dylan with his band of gypsies, from Joan Baez and Ronee Blakley to Allen Ginsberg, barnstorming in the Rolling Thunder Revue.

Early one afternoon, after a screening of Bob Dylan's just-released movie, the four-hour-long *Renaldo and Clara*, I drove him back to his lovely ranch estate a few miles north of Malibu, California.

On this day, Dylan's curly brown hair was as unruly as ever, and he was dressed in nondescript boots and jeans, a black beret and a short black leather jacket. He wasn't unkempt, just careless.

Much of his rather eclectic wardrobe is composed of items found by friends in second-hand stores, and recently, when his lawyer instructed him to wear a conservative suit to a court appearance concerning the custody of his children, he had borrowed one from an MGM wardrobe mistress.

Over the next three weeks, he would talk to me about the many sides of Bob Dylan: his music, his home, and family, his hatred of the Dylan myth and his battle to reconcile artistry with celebrity.

Bob Dylan was born May 24, 1941 in Duluth, Minn. Six years later, his family moved upstate to Hibbing, a small mining town near the Canadian border, where his father owned a hardware store.

"When I was young, my life was built around the family. We got together all the time. There weren't many Jews around, and we never thought much about it one way or the other. Our family was close, but not narrow: One uncle married a Catholic, another married an Egyptian."

"No one else in the family made music, but they didn't make it hard for me. I played music for as long as I can remember, first the piano, then harmonica and guitar."

"I didn't go out for sports like everyone else, so other than my family I didn't have many friends."

When he was 13, Dylan turned from poetry to songwriting. Within the year, he'd organized some local kids into a group called the Golden Chords, which occasionally played at local talent shows and school dances. But Minneapolis was where he could find the rhythm and blues music he could only hear on the radio in Hibbing.

"As soon as I got out of high school, I went to Minneapolis. I knew I had to live as an artist, but I didn't know where to go to do it, so I headed for there."

"When I started out there wasn't any money in folk music, and I didn't expect there would ever be. Being an artist was the thing."

Dylan enrolled at the University of Minnesota, living in the Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity house as Bob Zimmerman while playing folk music at a local coffeehouse as Bob Dylan.

"I went to school for a year and a half, but spent almost all my time in Denver."

During this period, Dylan also read Woody Guthrie's *Bound for Glory* and soon adopted him as his musical idol. **"Then for awhile I was into tracking down musicians. I'd hitchhike to where they were supposed to be, but then they wouldn't be there. I once traveled hundreds of miles to find Sleepy John Estes, but he wasn't home and nobody knew where to find him."**

"Finally, after a year and a half, I went to Chicago. I stayed with some guy who had given me his address once when he heard me play."

"I stayed in Chicago about six months, teaching people the songs I knew and having them teach me the ones they knew. I stayed in Chicago longer than the other places because there was more music."

In 1975, Bob Dylan anticipated the Bicentennial by hitting the road with the Rolling Thunder Revue, a band of troubadours whose ranks included, among others, Joan Baez, Roger McGuinn, Allen Ginsberg and Ronee Blakley—and a film crew.

The result of that unique six-week tour, the just-released, four-hour long *Renaldo and Clara*, is as unexpected a film as were the songs he wrote 15 years ago. It is an astonishing account of the adventures of the musician, Renaldo (Bob Dylan), and his mate, Clara (Sara Dylan).

Still it may even be more interesting to watch Dylan watch *Renaldo and Clara*. During the times that I did, he stared raptly at the screen, sprawled comfortably in his seat with his head resting on his seat back, chain-smoking Camels. He said little, occasionally answering a question from someone sitting nearby, now and then sharing a thought with Howard Alk, his co-editor.

The narrator of the film is guitarist-songwriter David Blue, a long time Dylan colleague and friend. In several scenes, Blue gives a revealing, first-hand account of life with Dylan in Greenwich Village during the early '60s:

"I remember the day Bob wrote '*Blowin' in the Wind*.' " He came over to Gerde's Folk City and played for (folk singer) Gil Turner, who was scheduled to play that night. Turner thought it was incredible. Bob wrote the words and music down on a sheet of paper, and when Turner went on stage he taped the paper up on the microphone and played the song. Everyone was stunned. As far as I know that was the first time that song was ever played to an audience."

During the second half of the film, Blue reaffirms Dylan's earlier statement that when he first arrived in New York City in January, 1961, and spent the succeeding months finding his way around the Greenwich Village folk scene. He also visited the dying Woody Guthrie, four or five times a week. Under the management of Albert Grossman and (Grossman's then-partner) John Court, he signed with Colombia Records. Bob Dylan his first album, appeared in March, 1962, and by 1963 he was being hailed as a "spokesman for his generation."

In 1964 Dylan told a friend: **"I'm hungry, and restless, and pretty darned wretched. I used to think I was smart. But I don't any more. Don't even know if I'm normal."**

Now, in the screening room, it seemed appropriate to ask Dylan if these thoughts accurately reflected his feeling about his first years of "stardom."

"No, not really," he replied. **"Actually, those were good years. I was writing, sometimes all day and night, and the songs were good. The people were good. There was a lot happening in music then, and I enjoyed it."**

In 1965, Dylan went on a concert tour of England. He was accompanied by Joan Baez, who had been his lover for the past year, and who plays "The Woman In White" (among other characters) in *Renaldo and Clara*.

Later in 1965, Dylan and Baez were in California for a concert when the final blow-up between the "peace queen" and the "king of rock and roll" occurred. The year before Dylan had met Sara Lowndes, an intelligent, beautiful student of Eastern religion who lived at New York's arty Chelsea Hotel. It is not clear whether Dylan broke up with Baez because he had fallen in love with Sara, or if he grew close to her during the months after the split with Baez.

Whatever, he and Sara were married on November 22, 1965, a union that would last until last year. Dylan and Baez would not appear on stage together until the Rolling Thunder Revue, (their) reconciliation apparently so complete that it led to her starring in his movie along with Sara Dylan.

Dylan says he **"lived out his thing with Joan Baez years ago,"** and that this divorce from Sara is **"one of those things that happens in life. It didn't have anything to do with the movie."**

In July, 1966, while driving his motorcycle near his home in Woodstock, Dylan had an accident which nearly killed him. He broke his neck, had a concussion and serious internal injuries, and spent a week in the hospital and a year recuperating at his home in a brace. Although only a few friends saw him during that following year, and rumors of paralysis, disfigurement, insanity and drug addiction were rampant, he spent his time profitably; playing music and working on the film which he would call *Eat The Document*.

During the year of seclusion, Dylan and the Band recorded the epic Basement Tapes. But that album was not to be released until 1975, and the album that became associated with Dylan's re-emergence was the deceptively "folksy" John Wesley Harding, released in 1968.

After Dylan and Sara were married in 1965, he adopted her daughter Marie. (sic) Shortly after they moved permanently to Woodstock, N. Y. in 1966, their other four children began to arrive: Jesse Byron in 1966; Anna in 1967; Seth Abraham Isaac in 1968; and Samuel in 1969. (sic)

In light of the past year's acrimonious divorce proceedings and custody battles, I asked Dylan if he had always assumed he would marry, and if his ideas of marriage had been traditional?

"Yes. No one in my family gets divorced. It's just unheard of, nobody does that. And so when I did get married I never conceived of getting divorced. I figured it would last forever. But it didn't."

"I believe in marriage. I know I don't believe in open marriage. Sexual freedom just leads to other kinds of freedom."

"Women are sentimental," he said. **"They get into that romantic thing more easily. But I see that as a prelude. Women use romance and passion to sweeten you up. A man is no more than a victim of that passion."**

"You give me a woman who can cook and sew," he said, **"and I'll take that over passion any day."**

"I'd like to find a mate. But I can't spend any time with a woman if we're not friends. If we're not friends I don't want to get involved on a personal level."

Late one evening, Bob Dylan sat at the kitchen table in his Malibu, California home. In a few weeks, he and a band anchored by Rolling Thunder Revue guitarist Rob Stoner would be leaving for a February tour of Japan and Australia. Now under the management of high-powered Jerry Weintraub (who also manages John Denver and Frank Sinatra), he planned to release an album of new songs in the spring, and tour in the U. S. later this year.

Through most of the night, Dylan talked to me about the pressures of celebrity.

In 1964, Dylan had told Village Voice columnist Nat Hentoff that he didn't want to write for an audience any longer. **"I don't want to be a spokesman,"** he'd said. **"From now on I want to write from inside myself."**

Would the attention provoked by the release of his new movie, *Renaldo and Clara*, reactivate the demand that he again assume the long-despised role of "spokesman."

"I doubt that very much," Dylan replied, **"I'm not the spokesman for anybody's generation. Far from it. In fact, I want to emphatically deny being the spokesman for our generation. Fame is just having your name known by a lot of strangers. People who are kind or good are the ones who ought to be famous."**

Despite the popular conception of Dylan as being reclusive and inactive during the late '60s and early '70s, he actually had been productive.

Among other things he had released the *New Morning*, *Nashville Skyline* and *Self-Portrait* albums; in 1969, he'd appeared at the Isle of Wight Festival in England; and in 1971 he'd joined George Harrison at Madison Square Garden for the benefit Concert For Bangladesh.

In 1974, he'd joined the Band in a cross-country tour to support his *Planet Waves* album and gather material for the *Before The Flood* collaboration with the Band.

But when asked if the response shown by audiences during that tour had pleased him, the vehemence of his answer was surprising.

"I hated every moment of that 1974 tour. It wasn't playing with the Band. They were great. We didn't 'break up,' you know. They just got tied up with matters of their own. I had no control over what was going on."

"I don't like to feel controlled by others. I choose people. They don't choose me. All of my deep relationships are concerned with my work. My work is my life. I choose people who can help me in my work, but it's a two-way street."

"That's part of why I stopped performing in 1967. The audience no longer came to see me. They didn't even see me and I was standing right in front of them."

"They came to see the myth of Bob Dylan, and that's all they saw. That myth could either please them or disappoint them. But whatever happened didn't have anything to do with me. Just with the myth."

"Look," he continued. **"Everybody has some work to do. You know that. I know what I have to do. And what I love to do. I've known it all my life."**

That discipline exists in his music.

"Usually I play for several hours. I'll play alone for an hour, then play with other musicians. When I'm writing songs, however, I play alone more than with others."

"I go to bed at a reasonable hour, generally, and wake up feeling good. I don't go out much. I get bored when I do. I have my friends, but Los Angeles doesn't have the same tradition of hanging out as does Mew York or Chicago. People are less accessible here."

Throughout 1967, while the world gloomily speculated about Dylan's hermitage in Woodstock, New York, he was actually having an interesting and productive time. He spent his days writing songs, working on his autobiography *Tarantula* and making music with Robbie Robertson and the other members of the Band. At night he holed up in the editing room he and co-editor Howard Alk had equipped in the basement of his home, at work on a television film for which ABC-TV had advanced him $100,000.

That Dylan film, an hour-long documentary montage of tour footage, so appalled the executives at ABC that they had no trouble believing the title, *Eat The Document*, was Dylan's way of describing his feelings about the contract between them. Having granted Dylan complete artistic control, a frustrated ABC announced they would write off their investment and store the film away in a dark closet.

Dylan ultimately resolved the impasse by buying the film from them with his own money, but the experience left him long on enthusiasm for film-making and short on confidence in the business. Therefore, at the beginning of 1968, as he disassembled the editing crew and equipment, he had little to say about any future movie plans except to tell Alk that he would **"be in touch when the time is right."**

Eventually, in the fall of 1975, Alk was awakened one night by a call at his home in Montreal, Canada. Without any of the usual social niceties, he heard a voice say simply: "Bob wants to know if you're ready."

Alk was ready, and immediately joined Dylan at a secluded resort near New York City, where he once again became cameraman, confidante and mysterious player, assisting Dylan as he simultaneously directed rehearsals for the upcoming Rolling Thunder Revue.

He also organized the writers and technicians working on *Renaldo and Clara* and worked with the cast of the film.

"I'm just glad it was done, and we put it out, (said Dylan). **We didn't really make it to impress a lot of people. We just wanted to make some sense out of the past, present and future. To make some sense of reality, to use it and try and make a better reality for ourselves."**

"I hope enough people see it so that we get our money back, but if not then we'll know it just wasn't meant to be. Obviously we weren't making a commercial film. A commercial film is 90 minutes long so that you can show it several times a day. This film is four hours long, Americans are spoiled, they expect art to be like wallpaper, with no effort, just to be there."

"This wasn't the kind of movie where one person is the boss. I directed the actors, but they directed me, too."

"We could talk for ages and so could everyone else and still miss the real point," said Dylan of his movie. **"And the point is simply this: That no matter what catastrophes come down, no matter what turmoil, no matter what horrors befall the world, someone will still get up and sing to the moon and dance around the campfire." •**

10 March 1978
Chris Adams interview, Kingsford Smith Airport, Sydney, Australia

Source: *Circulating tapes*

CA: Will you be talking to the press while you are here?
BD: All the time.

12 March 1978
Craig McGregor Interview, Brisbane, Australia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 197-214.

This interview was conducted at the Brisbane Festival Hall on March 12th 1978, the day of Dylan's first concert in Australia for 12 years. It was published in *New Musical Express* on April 22nd. The introduction to McGregor's article provides a good backdrop to the interview itself.

TANGLED UP IN BLUE

When Bob Dylan arrived in Sydney for his first Australian tour in over a decade, he found himself confronted at the airport by a formidable and slightly unruly phalanx of pressmen and sundry media people, all anticipating a press conference.

Dylan uttered one word – **"hopeless"**- and walked straight through, declining to talk to any of them. The following day, though, in Brisbane, he did agree to talk to Craig McGregor. An Australian writer, McGregor is the author of *Bob Dylan: A Retrospective* (Picador), a collection first published in 1972 of just about all the best writing about and interviews with Dylan up to that time.

McGregor first met Dylan during the 1966 Australian tour. Dylan seemed to like him, even according him the honor of playing him the acetates of *Blonde On Blonde* (which left McGregor bewildered and speechless). Since then they have been in touch from time to time; Dylan probably felt relatively at ease for the interview.

McGregor says he found Dylan "gentle and straightforward", and wondering how his tour would go. It was a very different situation to that in '66 when, as Dylan says in the interview, he had been wondering if every gig would be his last.

Reading between the lines of the interview, Dylan still seems affected by his recent divorce -he was quite emotional in talking about Sara and his family life, and had possibly been more upset by the whole episode than he would care to admit. Similarly, he was reluctant to talk about his new film, *Renaldo And Clara*, and was probably disappointed by the reaction to it; his quote **"fading from my mind"** perhaps covers a lot of real resentment.

The interview/conversation lasted for almost two hours. The transcript that follows is word-for-word Dylan, and is virtually complete. McGregor says the only editing he has done is to delete most of his own contributions to the conversation.

THE BOB DYLAN INTERVIEW

CM: What would you like to talk about?

BD: I've got nothing on my mind right now. I've no axes to grind with anybody or anything. I'm back workin' again and I'm relatively happy doing that. I was off for two years; I can't go that long without touring.

CM: You mean before the Rolling Thunder tour?

BD: We did the Rolling Thunder in 1975, 1976, and then did another one after that to help support this movie we were doing. You didn't see the movie yet?

CM: *Renaldo And Clara*? No.

BD: I think you'll like it. It isn't for everybody, but I think you'll like it. It got a lot of criticism, but that's because people have expectations, y'know, they shouldn't really but they do.

CM: I like the idea that it's four hours long.

BD: It isn't too long.

CM: Have you been disappointed in the reaction to it?

BD: Ah... The people who go and see it, I can feel resistance to it, by people who I don't know who are very critical of it. But they miss it. They're not looking at it in the way it should be seen, I know. At this point it's fading away, just like the last album is fading away.

CM: You mean in your head?

BD: Yeah. After you've done it, you've done it, so I'm not in any position to defend it against people who are critical of it. I don't feel I have to defend it anyway. There's enough people who like it who, if they felt like it, would defend it. Do you know Daryl Poncison?

CM: No.

BD: He's a writer; he writes books, but they turned a couple of them into movies; *Cinderella Liberty* and *The Last Detail*. They are both movies about sailors, they were playing in the States for a while. He just wrote another one called *The Ring*, it's about a circus. Possibly he'll be working with me on the next movie, which we want to have a script for.

CM: Tell me why you're getting back on the road again; do you really like it?

BD: It's not that I like it or dislike it; it's what I'm destined to do. Muddy Waters is still doing it, and he's 65. In the States there's a lotta old guys that are doing it, and I kinda feel that when I'm that old, as long as I can do it, I guess I will do it, because it's all I did ever do or want to do.

CM: Do you find it still gives you a charge – do you get energy from it or does it take it out of you?

BD: Well, it takes it and gives it. It's a kick to sing these songs that were written in 1961, 1962, and to feel that they're still alive right now, I mean that's an incredible rush, just for that.

CM: What about these new arrangements?

BD: They're not new in the sense that the melodies have changed. I'm still playing three chords, but the lines are there whereas the lines were never there before. It would be all melody based upon old folk songs. The lines became clearer to me as time went on, the structure of all those songs, so what's happened is that I've gotten down to play the line on the guitar or piano, the basic structural line of the song which holds it up. That's all it amounts to when they say new arrangements, because they aren't really new arrangements, they're just stronger lines.

CM: When you say line, you don't mean just the melody or the tune...

BD: Well, it's the line of the melody which can be broken down and simplified. Some of the lyrics have changed.

CM: You're doing them faster, rockier than before?

BD: No. I don't listen to that much kind of music, you know, I only listen to the old music: the old blues singers and the old country singers. No, they're about the same. I get energy just knowing they're still alive, and that the lines are so strong even after all these years.

CM: But changing them makes it possible for you to keep singing them, and resinging them?

BD: Every time I sing 'em they are real to me, I've been through so much that some are even more real to me now than when I wrote them – then I could feel what they were about, but now I can understand what they're about.

CM: But do you ever feel that in changing some of your old songs, you're untrue to the person you were when you wrote them?

BD: No, I feel pretty true to that person. There was a period of time when I couldn't relate to that person, but now I can. I relate more to the person that wrote those songs than I do to the person I am that's walking around, in most cases.

CM: I don't know whether to believe you when you say that.

BD: Yeah, it's true. I have new songs too. We aren't going to be playing any of them – maybe we'll play one, we did one in Japan, we didn't do it in New Zealand, it's a real simple song which we worked up. We got a couple of them. See, I'm also workin' with this band, trying to hold a permanent band together, which I've never done before.

CM: What are some of the new songs Bob?

BD: I don't usually have a title until after I've written them. There's one called *Changing Of The Guard*, another one called *Her Version Of Jealousy*...

CM: *Her Version Of Jealousy*?

BD: Yeah (laughing) **Another one called – I've forgotten it.**

CM: Can you tell me a bit more about them?

BD: Man, I really can't, they just have to be sung. They must reflect on this energy field that is happening now, in the same way that the old ones reflected on that. I mean, I get criticized for not writing songs like I used to write...

CM: Do people still do that?

BD: All the time! It seems all I see is criticism for not writing songs like those old ones, but why should I when I'm still singing them? I couldn't write any song like that old song that would be better than it.

CM: When did you write these new ones?

BD: I wrote a bunch of them in the fall, and before this tour I had about seven or eight of them. I think I'll be writing a few more on this trip. I'll record them when I get back to the States in April, and that album will be out by spring.

CM: Have you got a title for that yet?

BD: No.

CM: So these are all songs you've written in the last few months since you broke up with Sara?

BD: Yeah, since that divorce thing happened.

CM: Are they related to that?

BD: Not really; we were breaking up for a long time. So it doesn't reflect too much of that.

CM: How come you seem so at ease at the moment? I mean, I'd like to know the secret...

BD: I'm not really, I just appear that way! This is a pretty easy place to be, this town, it's a pretty easygoing place.

CM: I didn't think you liked Australia too much last time you were here.

BD: Well, we had a rough time last time. I think we came before any of the big groups came, before the sound was sophisticated; they put us in boxing arenas and wrestling arenas – in one place we followed, I think, Gorgeous George into an arena where the stage moved...

CM: That was Sydney! The stage turned a quarter of a revolution every now and then. If I remember.

BD: Do they still have that building?

CM: No, they've torn it down. It was old Sydney stadium, where Jack Johnson took the world heavy-weight championship from Tommy Burns in the early part of this century and became the first black heavyweight champ... there used to be a lovely old photograph in the aisle leading into the stadium, Johnson and Burns in the ring together, with this great sea of thousands of felt hats watching the black champ beat the white man for the first time.

BD: I saw a photograph of that.

CM: You probably saw it there. Things have changed a bit; but have you been here long enough to notice anything?

BD: I think we played here before. I don't see much change in Australia, just in the streets I've walked around, since the last time I was here. Perhaps just a little bit (laughing)...

Progress doesn't seem to have touched down in the streets over here. People are still the same, in the pubs.

CM: What's your next project going to be?

BD: Just more records, and hopefully another movie.

CM: Any priority there? Which are you most interested in?

BD: Just making more songs.

CM: You don't feel yourself changing over to movies?

BD: I want to make more movies. On this last one we did the best with what we had. We have a small crew...

CM: What's the next one going to be about?

BD: It's about evil. Good and evil.

CM: Oh yeah – anything else?

BD: That's mainly it. It's a kinda complicated story to spring on you, or give it away. We're gonna try and have most of it scripted and outlined before we even start. It can't cost nearly as much money as this one did, and it can't take nearly as much time to do.

CM: Is that partly because you're disillusioned with the idea of improvised scripts?

BD: No, not really. The people who got on this movie are intellectual people, not just the people who want to get out of their house and see a movie. Those people seem to find something in it worthwhile. It's that establishment intelligentsia that got down on it so hard, and I don't know whose fault that was; it was probably our fault in showing it to them. But when people see what they've written, and haven't seen the movie themselves, they decide, what the hell, if they say this about it I guess it can't be any good, and they don't give it a chance. We hurt ourselves in showing it to all those critics, but we were open about it and thought it was good. But it doesn't really affect me, because when I started out singing I just had a small group of people following me and most people didn't know what I was doing anyway. The same press that was putting my work down back then is the same press that's doing it now, nothing's really changed that much...

CM: Have you ever thought of trying to do a really extended musical work?

BD: No, I don't have any of the ideals: but other people do, and they're doing it with songs I've written. There's a group in New York that's doing a play using a lot of songs, and they're a group of clowns – ex circus clowns who all quit the circus for one reason or another and came to New York and choreographed a whole play using songs I've written. Things like that. I don't have the time to do that.

CM: Have you thought of not using your old songs, but writing a complete opera, musical, the sort of thing Gershwin did?

BD: I feel too young yet to do that. I still haven't written all the songs I really want to write. It would be a good idea if you were stationary in the one place for a while.

CM: Or is it that you feel that you don't have to prove yourself in some substantial form like that?

BD: Not to me, I don't. The idea attracts me. But my mind can't hold something for that long period of time, with songs which are all in a certain vein, like *Porgy And Bess*, or something like that. I would love to be able to do that, but I can't sit down and map it out. I lose track of my thoughts and I get too involved in other things to keep coming back to such a big thing as that. I don't think I could concentrate on that right now. I don't think those things like *Tommy*, or what have you, are what you're talking about.

CM: What about other directions?

BD: That's it, I don't have any direction but one.

CM: Which is that again?

BD: That's this one, straight ahead.

CM: What about writing apart from song writing?

BD: No. I do once in a while, but you really have to get laid back for that. You got to be finished up with one aspect of things and go lay back and you'll get it, you know. I'd like to do that too. But it isn't the time for me to do that; maybe when I'm 80 or 90.

CM: What about poetry?

BD: No, I'm not writing too much of anything but songs.

CM: Sounds as though you've refined yourself down.

BD: I was pretty spread out a few years ago, trying to do this and do that, and it didn't make much sense to me, I didn't get anything much out of it, I was too wired up so I'm back just doin' that one single thing now.

CM: How much of a success do you think you've made of your personal life in the past few years?

BD: My personal life? my personal life is pretty hard to keep track of. I've kind of narrowed it down to what I care about, who I care about, what I care about, and when I care about. I've narrowed it down as fine as I can to that. Being in this kind of situation you meet a lot of people that are attracted to you, and also you become attracted to quite a few people, and you can't really be sure many times whether that's true or not, so you just have to let the situation run it's course. But in the recent past I don't even give it a chance to run it's course. I just kind of stay with my old friends, and my old loves and old mates, you know, and at least that allows me to work. The rest of it don't allow me to work. If I get hung up I could disappear into the jungle for three or four months, I've done that.

CM: Does that mean you feel you're faced with a choice between your music and your private life?

BD: My personal life suffers because of that. I think ultimately man is better off if he can stay in one place and see the world revolve around him rather than have to be out there revolving. I try to stay put as much as I can, but I can't all the time, and I guess my personal life has suffered because of that. The privacy thing I don't think about too much anymore. I never went after fame or fortune, but I didn't turn it down. That was one of them things I had to learn how to adjust to.

CM: And now you've got it you don't want to let it go.

BD: Now I have it, it's not that I don't want to let it go, because I don't believe that I'm attached to it, but I can't let it go, there's no way I could let it go, because people know me. But a lot of people know me, and then a lot of people know the image; you get a lot of resistance from people who just know the image, who can't see through it.

CM: I still think it fucks you around.

BD: No doubt about it.

CM: What you do about it, I'm not too sure.

BD: It fucks you around in a lot of ways, but you have to be open to... it's not a burden that's just been placed on someone to drive them down.

CM: Can you channel all this into your songs?

BD: No, I don't write from that, I don't use that; I don't figure anybody cares about that, I personally don't care about it, I don't even care if somebody else is into it; I think it's a superficial thing, fame and fortune.

CM: I meant more, you write songs about Sara – I wonder whether you can channel your private emotions into your music, that's one of the reasons you're able to write songs. You suffer, and that comes out into your songs.

BD: (Pause) **That particular song, well... some songs you figure you're better off not to have written. There's a few of them layin' around.**

CM: There's some parts of your life you'd rather not have lived, also.

BD: Yeah.

CM: Have you got into any religion since I saw you last?

BD: No, no dedicated religion, I have not gotten into that. No dogma. I don't usually do that, I usually play my guitar. I don't know why, I've never gone on any of them guru trips, I've never felt that lost.

CM: I thought for a while you were moving back to your Jewish background.

BD: No, I don't have much of that background to go back to, so if I was going to a Jewish religion, or Islam, or Muslim, Catholic, or whatever that religion might be, I would have to go to it; I don't have it, that religion to fall back on. What I have to fall back on is just my own isolated existence. I don't really think too much about those things.

CM: But in the interview you did with Jonathan Cott (in *Rolling Stone*) there were a lot of references there...

BD: Oh, Jonathan, yeah, he had all these sayings with him; we were just sitting around getting loaded, y'know, and he would bring out these quotations, which sounded really good.

CM: But you responded to them.

BD: Yeah, I'm excited by those kind of principals on life, and moral codes, that are part of any religion. They get to me. But as far as organised religion goes, I don't see myself as partaking too much of that.

CM: But whether you realize it or not, that Jewish thing must have given you a very heavy imprinting; I've assumed that's stayed with you, and that in a way you still draw on it.

BD: Possibly. It's possible. But I don't know how Jewish I am. See, with these blue eyes, which are Russian. Y'know, back in 1700's, 1800's, I know I have different blood in me.

CM: What sort of blood?

BD: Cossack blood. I don't know how any one could escape it, anyone of my family that lived back then.

CM: Did you say somewhere that you had some gypsy blood in you, is that right?

BD: I'm not sure. From the questions I asked of my old family, and the answers that I've been given, I know there's Russian blood in me.

CM: Where does that come from?

BD: It comes from Odessa.

CM: That's where you get your blue eyes from?

BD: Probably, because in Odessa mostly everyone has the color of my eyes.

CM: Have you been there?

BD: I've never been there, I don't know if I'd like to go there either (laughing)**.**

CM: Sounds to me as though you're constructing a very exotic past for yourself.

BD: No, I don't do that! I just...

CM: You, Django Reinhart...

BD: No, no, I don't know about the gypsy thing, I might have said that; to somebody once, I'm not sure about that because that's from Rumania.

CM: Do you feel very Jewish, Bob?

BD: I don't know what Jewish people feel like.

CM: That's a nice answer! For Christ's sake, you know what I mean... as a New York...

BD: As a New York Jew?

CM: Yeah.

BD: (Laughing) **I'm not from New York.**

CM: Isn't that part of you?

BD: I feel a part of all people really.

CM: You don't feel proud of that background?

BD: I feel proud of what I am. How proud can you be? I mean, there's so many people walking the earth, like, if everyone among us is gonna feel proud of who they are, mankind would be in a hell of a mess.

CM: Maybe mankind is in a hell of a mess.

BD: I feel proud of my accomplishments.

CM: Sure. But often people try to link themselves to a tradition.

BD: If you check back on my work, it doesn't link itself to a tradition.. Not any one that I've ever heard of.

CM: But your music does.

BD: Well, my music, yeah; but that's all Stateside music.

CM: That's still a tradition. You mention blues singers, and so on; they're traditions you've hooked into.

BD: Musically.

CM: But not personally?

BD: I don't know. I feel life is going by at a tremendous speed. What I feel one moment I usually don't feel the next moment. I don't hold on to any period of time for too long. Even all the things I've ever written, or said, or done, I sometimes think it's all a joke, really, in certain periods of time.

CM: Do you ever look at it and think it could have been said or done by someone else?

BD: No, I think I was meant to write that.

CM: So you see yourself there still?

BD: Yeah.

CM: I think the reasons a lot of people link themselves to tradition is they feel they have no importance otherwise.

BD: Well tradition is great if you've got a community, and a society; then tradition will hold you up as long as you're living. But if you're society is crumbling, what right do you have to be part of that tradition?

CM: But what makes you a sort of freewheeling atom, like the Lone Ranger?

BD: Well, most people in the States right now are pretty freewheeling.

CM: Do you like that, though? Do you think it's good?

BD: No, I don't think that's any good at all.

CM: But that's what you're doing.

BD: I don't have any choice. I would prefer a steady family life.

CM: But that didn't work.

BD: That didn't work. That really didn't work. You know, I could be happy pounding metal all day, going home to a big fat wife, and eating a meal and, y'know, going to bed. That would be my ideal of happiness (laughing)**.**

CM: You mean that's your romantic idea of happiness for someone else, but not you.

BD: No, it's my idea for me! (laughing) **I'm still open to that.**

CM: You ought to hang that on your motel door.

BD: Otherwise, if I didn't believe in that, I'd be burned out by now; some of the things I've done.

CM: It puts you in a hard position; you've nothing much to prop you up.

BD: But I never did. When I was last here, 12, 13 years ago, it was the same thing.

CM: You were propped up pretty much with drugs then.

BD: Yeah, we were taking a lot of chemicals back then, which doctors prescribe for entertainers and athletes... But those were different days, things were a lot simpler then, we were all on the way up.

CM: You mean it's harder at the top!

BD: Ah, at the top it's pretty difficult, you could fall at any time. No, it doesn't really worry me. Because morning always comes so quick that I don't have a chance to think about it.

CM: Is that the only reason you don't worry about it?

BD: You don't have much of a chance to think, really, on this level. The only time you get a chance to think is when you're thinking about your work. It's not a healthy thing, it can't be for everybody. But to make it you really have to cross a lot of things off.

CM: I wouldn't have thought that you, of all people, would have to worry for one instant any longer about proving yourself. You don't still feel any need for that, do you?

BD: Yeah, I'm always trying to... it's not proof of yourself, like in the old days. What it is... I feel like I've had it, you know; and I'm doing it; I know it; and if the audience is still there, well I'm still here. If not I'll be in the corner bar playing. I don't have that youthful desire to prove I can go out and conquer the masses. A tour like this is just a tour. There is no great meaning to it. I'll be touring a lot. it's just what I do. I'm not sure about the event, and what it means to the people. To us we're just going on playing.

CM: Do you think you can extend yourself much more?

BD: I don't know. I don't really think so. I think I've pushed it as far as I can, and I'll just have to maintain it on this level.

CM: I'm surprised to hear you say that.

BD: Well, I can write new songs, and I can sing 'em, but they're always going to be sung in the same way. I mean, my style is pretty well defined. Everything about what I do is pretty well defined by this time. Sure, you could ask Paul McCartney this same question, and he might say, oh yeah, there's more to do, there's more limits to reach... But not really.

CM: Does he say that sort of thing?

BD: I don't know if he does. He could, but it would only be a superficial thing. I don't have the urge to learn any more technique than what I already know. If I was to go on and push further I'd have to learn more technique, and I've done that. I don't figure I can do any more with that technique.

CM: But you're willing to take on films, which means learning a whole new technique.

BD: Yeah, but the film is an image. I'm not sure how great a love, or great a need, I have for that. I know I do now, because I figure... I'm looking at the film as a painting, and if you can get character into that painting, and make it come alive, that's what my intentions are. I don't know if that's the right way people are making films nowadays; some are, but most I don't think are. I'm trying to get more out of that film. But in reality it isn't as great as standing on stage and singing. For me it's not that much of a kick to get your vision across.

CM: It's a nice thing to do anyhow; make a film.

BD: It is, if you believe in it.

CM: Do you do much painting these days, like you used to?

BD: I haven't done so much painting for a long time. I miss it. I'd like to get to a place eventually like Churchill, you know, just sit around and paint! And write your memoirs.

CM: It sounds as though you're mature, that's what it sounds like.

BD: I don't think so. Maybe I have matured, or whatever them words are, but it isn't like that inside. What I've learned to do, which I didn't learn in the old days, is just hold it, in order to put it out when the right time is. So when people say he's mellowed, or matured, that's true, and I've gone through a lot of changes so it is true, but I just hold back most of the time to let it out. And if I didn't have that way to let it out I'd probably be just as crazy as everybody else, if not more so.

CM: Whereas as it is you're absolutely sane!

BD: Yeah, right (laughing)**.**

CM: To reach a stage where you're pretty confident, and can hold back and let it out when you want to, I'd have thought that must feel pretty good.

BD: I've always been confident though. I went to New York confident, I didn't know what I was going to have, what I was going to do, but I was confident I was going to come through. I wasn't going to roll under any wheels. I feel pretty confident now, in what we're doing. I don't know how much pleasure it gives me, but I know I'm doing what I'm supposed to do.

CM: When I said "mature", I suppose I was thinking of artists like Michelangelo and da Vinci, who reached a stage where they all had the technique, and at that stage they did their greatest work. Do you feel that could happen to you?

BD: No, I don't feel I could be a Michelangelo or da Vinci. These guys had too much isolation back then. They were given the nod; it's hard to find anybody that society will do that for these days, so you're pretty much on your own. Michelangelo and da Vinci weren't really on their own, they were pretty much supported. And encouraged. Their work was respected in it's time.

CM: But so are you, and so is your work.

BD: Well, I don't know if it is or it isn't. I never think about it, because I don't want to believe it – in case tables turn, or white goes to black, I don't want to be prepared, I don't want to be unprepared.

CM: Can you give me any idea as to where your work might move?

BD: No. It's in the same old place it's always been, it's not movin' anywhere, it's staying right where it is. It won't get any more complicated or simple than it is. New thoughts come and, y'know, new ideas, new feelings; and I can't say what they're going to be.

CM: I was thinking that, sometimes, you get some idea of what sort of shape your life is going to take for a while.

BD: Oh yeah, I've had them ideas.

CM: Did they ever turn out right?

BD: No, they never do. Things change so fast, so quickly. Just turn around, everything's gone.

CM: One of the reasons I bothered to do that book about you was at that stage I thought I could half understand what you were doing, in relation to myself: you were acting it in one way, I was acting it out in another. But I don't know that I can now.

BD: I bet you can. I'm just doing the same thing. You get the point where you're just doing it. That's the point I'm at now, I'm just doing it. I don't think about it anymore.

CM: Faced with something like the choice that you were faced with, in your life... if I understood it all... the family thing...

BD: Well, you've got to have that. I expect to have that. I just didn't make it one time. But I mean, I still got my kids. I got five kids. I see them quite a bit of the time. But... er, I expect to have that too. Again.

CM: Sounds like a failure, Bob. By you there, somewhere.

BD: What, in my marriage?

CM: Yeah.

BD: Right at the start... It wasn't a failure... it was a... Maybe it was a failure. Marriage was a failure. Husbandry... husband and wife was a failure. But...

CM: Not husbandry.

BD: Father and mother wasn't a failure.

CM: How were you at husbandry?

BD: Husbandry, I wasn't a very good husband. I don't know whether I was or wasn't, I don't know what a good husband is. I was good in some ways, as a husband, and not so good in other ways... But, I feel my true family relationship is up ahead of me somewhere.

CM: You mean, you'd try it again? You'd get married again?

BD: Oh yeah.

CM: You like that?

BD: Yeah, I like comin' home to the same woman. (Pause)**. It was a failure. You got to take the bad with the good. It didn't disillusion me at all.**

CM: Did it knock you around to have a real failure like that, because I don't think you had a failure up till then?

BD: Oh yeah! (laughing)**.**

CM: What were your other failures?

BD: I failed at school.

CM: That was a long time ago.

BD: Not so long. My life seems to have flashed by in a minute. When you think about it, er... but then again, "there's no success like failure."

CM: That's a nice line.

BD: I believe it, too. It wasn't a failure... If you fail at one job, and you pick up another job, which you like more, then you really can't consider what happened a failure. There aren't really any mistakes in life. They might seem to knock you out of proportion at the time; but if you have the courage and the ability and the confidence to go on, well then that failure, you can't look at it as a failure, you just have to look at it as a blessing in a way.

CM: When you say that, you're not saying you believe everything is predestined, do you?

BD: No, I don't believe everything is predestined, but it is in a way. We're sitting here right now in the present, but we could talk about yesterday, and if we want to look at yesterday we could see that it was all predestined, because it was, if we're looking back everything is predestined. And tomorrow we'll be looking back on today, and today will have been predestined: we just don't know it now. So in a way I do believe in predestination; but only when you get to the place you can look back on does it become proof of itself.

CM: Or make sense.

BD: Right. But you can't project into the future, which probably gets conflicted with predestination. Things upset you, which you don't have any understanding or knowledge of at the time.

CM: Does that knock you around?

BD: Yeah, it knocks me around. Usually when you're caught up in the turmoil of some personal event, and you can't seem to work it out and you're impatient with time doing it, you become impatient, and then you decide to get angry. But if you've been through it enough times to know it does work itself out, well then it just doesn't mean as much. That's what's happened to me, anyway, I still get booted around in my personal life, here and there, but er... I just try to understand that... tomorrow is another day.

CM: How do you handle it?

BD: Well, fortunately I handle it just by working. I just forget it and go back to work, rehearse, make records, or play, and then when I turn around whatever it was was bothering me ain't there anymore. Sometimes that's true, sometimes it's not true, sometimes it's still there...

CM: Do you think you become a bit desensitized as time goes on, through that process?

BD: Probably do, yeah.

CM: Does that worry you?

BD: Yeah, it bothers me sometimes. Sometimes I can't even be sensitive to my own needs.

CM: You got a litmus paper test, you can hold up and say, how's my sensitivity rating?

BD: I wish there was some kind of test like that. I don't deny it makes you insensitive to the flow and activity around you. But then again, it makes you more sensitive, because you get more inward.

CM: Maybe you become wiser.

BD: As you go on, you begin to realize, if nothing else at least you're alive. If you've been around enough times you realize what it is not to be alive, and to go down, and have that feeling of going down, and if you've had enough of them times they build up – especially in my life, when I got to a point... where I just... I don't want... at least I'm alive.

CM: Jesus, I hope we get wiser, Bob, that's what I'm holding out for.

BD: I don't want to get wiser (laughing)**.**

CM: Did you have a motorbike accident at all?

BD: You mean back in 1966? After I left here? Yeah...

CM: It wasn't just a cover-up?

BD: No, I was put out of the picture. That was it, for me.

CM: And you nearly did wipe yourself right out?

BD: Well, it wasn't that the crash was so bad. I couldn't handle the fall. I was just too spaced out. So it took me a while to get my senses back. And once I got them back I couldn't remember too much. It was almost as if I had amnesia. I just couldn't connect for a long, long time. And what was happening around me I didn't want to connect with anyway. And what had happened in that period of time was that music had become very big. There were people doin' my songs. When I was working, I was nothin'. Talk about criticism now – there was more criticism back in those days than there is now. We'd get no good reviews; every time I put out an album the only good reviews would come from the musical papers; no one else knew what I was doing, or could care less... After I was knocked off, knocked out, I guess people thought I was gone, y'know, wasn't about to come back, so they started elevating me to a level of which no one could come back from. I wasn't out there working; and then acid became very big; and when I got back, I couldn't relate to that world, because what I was doing before that accident wasn't what was happening when I got back on my feet. We didn't have that adulation, that intense worship, I was just another singer really, but I had a loyal and intense following. And when I went back on the road I was more famous than I was when I'd gotten off the road. I was incredibly more famous. And I had a lot of people who were coming who weren't my true fans, I was just another famous name. These people didn't understand what I had done to get there, they just thought I was a famous name and I'd written songs Jimi Hendrix was singing, that's all they knew. And so I picked up a lot of new fans, and I made some records, and went on, y'know. I was half there and half wasn't. And when I finally did get back up to a place where I could express myself again, it surprised a lot of people. Because they didn't know that that's what it was all the time. When you see me on stage now. I mean, you don't get that feeling that I might die after the show. Whereas that's what happened the last time here.

CM: What was the place that you got back to, where you felt you could express yourself? Was that a particular album?

BD: No album. I haven't made one album yet that I figured I really... I haven't made an album since *Blonde On Blonde* that I felt I was all there for. I have written songs that were worthy of it; I haven't been able to perform them properly, but the ideas were there. I haven't been able to get them down right. I could relate to the idea in an abstract way but I wasn't able to get it down right, the way I felt I needed and wanted to bring it home.

CM: Which songs were those?

BD: From the *John Wesley Harding* album to the *Desire* album I've written a lot of songs which I feel real close to; I don't feel I performed them that well on record, or performed them with the proper meaning; but it still doesn't reflect on the songs at all, it reflects more on me. And I didn't get back into doing what it was, with everything blocked out of the way, until like, maybe, the end of the first Rolling Thunder tour. Or the second Rolling Thunder tour – at least I was doing the best I could in the environment I was in... And now I'm also doing the best I can within this environment; and I expect to go on and even do more acoustical things.

CM: Are you doing any acoustical things on this tour?

BD: I'm not doing any acoustical things, but we do some stuff which you'd think it was acoustical, but there's another level to it, it's just with guitar, organ, saxophone, but it brings it out in a way where you think it would be just me playing the guitar.

CM: Why aren't you doing any acoustical things?

BD: I'll tell you one reason, but you wouldn't probably believe me, is because I haven't found a magic guitar. I think I might have found one now, but I haven't found one where I could feel completely at one with. In my kind of thing you have to have the proper instrument. I played acoustical songs on that band tour in '74, but I pushed too hard. I played acoustical guitar on the Rolling Thunder tours, but I had to push too hard. And for my type of style I can't really afford to push too hard, because I lose the

reason behind the song. If you heard me sittin' in a room singing I wouldn't be pushing too hard.

CM: It pressurizes you, doesn't it?

BD: Yeah, I never used to push in the old days, and I was playin', y'know, an hour by myself and an hour with the band, and yet I was never pushing myself.

CM: What's the guitar you found.

BD: A guitar passed my way, I think it might be it's just telling me to use it.

CM: Which of the songs you've done in the past few years are the ones you feel are close to what you've just been talking about?

BD: There's a bunch of them in *Blood On The Tracks*. And there's half a dozen of them off *Desire*. *Knocking On Heaven's Door* is a good song. There's a bunch of good ones on *John Wesley Harding*, and *Nashville Skyline* there's good songs on.

CM: Which are the ones on *Blood On The Tracks*?

BD: *Idiot Wind*, *Big Girl Now*, *Tangled Up In Blue*...

CM: I've always thought *Tangled Up In Blue* was a great song. I really like it.

BD: Yeah. I like that one too.

CM: Without knowing anything about it, I half assumed that *Blue* might be Joan Baez.

BD: Joni Mitchell had an album out called *Blue*. And it affected me, I couldn't get it out of my head. And it just stayed in my head and when I wrote that song I wondered, what's that mean? And then I figured that it was just there, and I guess that's what happened, y'know.

CM: It's not the same *Blue* as in *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue*?

BD: No, no. That's a different *Blue*. That's a character right off the haywagon. That *Baby Blue* is from right upstairs at the barbers shop, y'know, off the street... a different *Baby Blue*, I haven't run into her in a long time, long time.

CM: You're being serious?

BD: Yeah, I've never looked at Joan Baez as being *Baby Blue*.

CM: Do you see much of her these days?

BD: (Pause). **She was on two tours with me. I haven't seen her since then. She went to Europe.**

CM: You involved in her?

BD: No, no...

CM: Listening to *Tangled Up In Blue*, I got the feeling it's like an autobiography; a sort of funny, wry, compressed novel...

BD: Yeah, that's the first I ever wrote that I felt free enough to change all the... what is it, the tenses around, is that what it is?

CM: The person...

BD: The he and the she and the I and the you, and the we and the us – I figured it was all the same anyway – I could throw them all in where they floated right -and it works on that level.

CM: It's got those nice lines at the end, about *"There was music in the cafés at night / And revolution in the air"* and *"Some are mathematicians, some are carpenters wives / I don't know how it all got started, I don't know / what they do with their lives."*

BD: I like that song. Yeah, that poet from the 13th century.

CM: Who was that?

BD: Plutarch. Is that his name?

CM: Yeah. Are there a lot of Dylanologists around still in the States?

BD: I don't pay much attention to that.

CM: Is Weberman still around, who was going through your garbage? I've lost touch with all that.

BD: I've lost touch with it, too.

CM: Well, you've changed cities for a start.

BD: Yeah. Got my own garbage dump. (laughing)

CM: But are you still hassled by people projecting on to you and your work, at that level?

BD: I get over-enthusiastic fans. But I never did pay much mind to that.

CM: And you've got some good, close friends that you can just spend time with?

BD: Yeah, I still have the same old people I've always known.

CM: Why have you built this great place on the West Coast?

BD: That's been built into a big thing out of nothin'. What had happened was that, somehow, we found ourselves in California in '73 or '74, and we were living on the beach, and I didn't like it, it was too noisy; traffic was on one side of the beach, ocean was on the other side, Couldn't eat in your sleep. So I found an area out there that was a little bit more remote, but very close by, and wasn't so glamorous and attractive to most of the Hollywood set. It was an older area, up on a cliff. I bought a house and I figured it was too small, I was going to remodel it. But we soon found it was pretty impossible to remodel it in any old way, because they have these laws, y'know, you can't build this on such and such; it was discouraging.

Anyway, I found a man one day who was pretty much like me in a lot of ways, but he was a contractor, and he didn't have hardly anything going, he was doing one house in the Canyon or some place, and he said, well you can do anything! You just draw it up and we can do it. Well, what happened was, we already had plans filed for one part of the house, but then we drew up another room one night, and filed that, and then drew up another room, and we just got carried away with this house!

One thing led to another, and it got to be a whole scene – it got to be a big scene up there, we had 30 people livin' in the back buildin' the house, and seein' as we could build it, I figured to go ahead and build it. So we built it and... it's standin' there now (laughing)**.**

CM: Are you going back to it? Sounds like a symbol...

BD: I don't know. Don't know if I'll go back to it, don't know if I'll sell it.

CM: You don't want to become a prisoner of it, like Randolph Hearst.

BD: Can't afford to become a prisoner of it. The day I start to become a prisoner to it is the day I blow it up, or somethin'.

CM: I know what you mean about being too close to the sea. I lived for a while at Byron Bay, lived and wrote there with my family, right on the beach; it was beautiful, and spectacular, and idyllic, and after a while it really got me down, because I've come to think of the sea as embodying some active principle. It becomes oppressive, a challenge. So now I'm living here in the bush, which is like the passive principle here in Australia.

BD: Do you have electricity?

CM: Yeah. That's about all we've got. No hot water, no nothing... an old wood stove. But it's really lovely, because there everything is waiting for you to put your own energy into it, you're not having to be challenged all the time. I really feel I'm going to do some good work there...

BD: (Pause) **I'm looking for a place like that.**

12 March 1978
Helen Thomas Interview, Brisbane, Australia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 663-668.

This interview took place in Dylan's Brisbane hotel on the afternoon of March 12th 1978. It was first published in *The Age* just a few days later, was referred to in Glen Baker's article in *Juke* (25th March 1978) and was to reappear later in a more complete form in the May 26th 1979 edition of *Juke* from which this interview is taken.

The opening paragraphs of Helen Thomas' (HT) article set the scene.

The number of times Bob Dylan has consented to an interview in recent years could be counted on one hand.

He's reclusive, elusive and enigmatic. While gossip columnists recount the daily lives of lesser known celebrities, Dylan has always managed to keep out of the public limelight, except in terms of his music.

On his Australian tour last year, Dylan had sent advance warning that there'd be no interviews. Journalist Helen Thomas, a confessed Dylan fan, ignored the warnings and finally cornered the man at his Brisbane hotel.

This is the complete, previously unpublished interview, exclusive to *Juke*.

Let's bring back the scene. It's early in the afternoon of March 12, 1978 – and Bob Dylan is an idol at ease. He is lounging around a top floor hotel suite in Brisbane, in jeans, no shirt, an open vest. The main table in the living room is piled with books, packets of cigarettes and a glass of orange juice that's half full.

Next door, this man's small, compact bodyguard is still hovering close at hand. But as Dylan sits back in the chair and finds his acoustic guitar, things seem to settle, as much as any encounter with the dozen [presumably 'doyen' – JAB] of rock poets can settle. And we talk – and his amazing blue eyes shine.

HT: I'd like to talk about your relationship with the Press. After your arrival in Sydney, I got the impression they have a fairly distorted view of you because a lot of the reports put you back as a force from the '60s, a spent force. Do you find that in the Press everywhere, or is that just here?

BD: Well, I don't know that; most of the Press I relate to is really just the music press. I don't know what the other Press thinks of me.

HT: You don't come into contact with daily newspapers very often then?

BD: No, no, no. In fact, not at all.

HT: Is that because you find them defensive, antagonistic or anything?

BD: Ah, no. I'm just not one of the public figures that has something to tell them every day. I don't know why they would want to talk to me really.

HT: What is your reaction to the description of you as a protest singer from the '60s? Does that bother you?

BD: Well, that's a *Time Magazine* quote. I think. I don't know; protest – I haven't thought much about it. I don't consider myself only a protest singer.

HT: That's one of the things that came out, clearly, on Tony Scaduto's book – that you never claimed to be a leader.

BD: Yeah. Tony's book came out in '71 and no, I don't relate too well to that. If I were only a protest singer. I wouldn't be here now.

HT: Still on the topic of media, there was a report in a national weekly paper here that the interviews you did (last year) with *Rolling Stone*, *Newsweek* and *Time*, you asked for copy approval on the *Stones*. Is that true?

BD: Ah. I think we might have asked for the cover. I don't think we asked for copy approval.

HT: Yeah. I just wondered because people still tend to say you like manipulating the Press as well as other people.

BD: Well, you know, you can't win really. If you don't talk to the Press, they call you a hermit and if you do talk to them, they say you're exploiting them. So (laughing) **there's no way out, really.**

HT: That's much the same with the songs you write. If you do write protest songs, you're leading the Movement – if you don't you've sold the Movement out.

BD: Right, but they don't say where this Movement is or what this Movement is about. To them, it's just copy, you know. It's selling papers. They don't know what you're talking about.

HT: Still on the media, could you expand on that comment you made before – about not just being a spent force from the '60s?

BD: Well, I got my start in the '60s, that's when I began to make records, so here we are in the '70s – there was a lot of us that came out of the '60s that are still around in the '70s, not too many but some... They say we're from the '60s the way they say Sinatra is from the '40s, or Elvis Presley's from the '50s. It's just a period of time people associate you with – there's very little you can do about it.

HT: You don't consider yourself a spent force, lost in time... (laughing)... in that age?

BD: ...Oh no. Not really.

HT: What sort of people are attracted to you now? How old are they – is there a particular age group?

BD: Well, you'll see tonight. I don't know what to expect here. Most of the audiences I play for are the same age as I am. And maybe we grow older and a little younger... when I look out, I usually see people of my time.

HT: What about younger people – are you reaching the kids now?

BD: Possibly, I don't know for sure. There are enough people my age to reach.

HT: What prompted you to do this tour of Japan and Australia?

BD: Ah, I don't know (laughing)**. I keep asking myself that.**

HT: I mean, do you like touring, are you happy on the road?

BD: Yeah, yeah. I'm touring most of the time and I like what I'm doing, which is why I do it... Japan was hard, you know, the sound was good but at a certain point in the show, it does cross your mind and you wonder how many people understand the words. It crosses your mind but it passes.

HT: Are you doing any writing on the road, while you're here? Or do you do that off the road?

BD: Ah, I'm usually writing most of the time, just fragments of songs... I try to finish it up some place along the way.

HT: Moving away from that, in the (first) Jonathan Cott interview (in *Rolling Stone* last year), you said you'd like to do several more films I think 12.

BD: Yeah. Well, when I say 12 films, I think it would be nice to do 12 films. But I don't know whether that's a possibility. But we are making another film though.

HT: OK, how has the reaction to *Renaldo and Clara* affected you? The reviews we've seen here have been very bad.

BD: Yeah. The critics have found all sorts of things to be critical of in the movie but they're taking it too seriously and what they're playing up is just what is superficially in the movie. It's a shame, really, because they have written too much stuff- we shouldn't have

shown it to them. They're all like intellectual people who sit around at parties and coffee tables and couldn't get much out of the movie except that it was Bob Dylan and Joan Baez.

But that's really not what the movie's about. It has to be seen by someone who doesn't know any people in the movie. You're better off if you go to that movie and you don't know who's who. If you know who's who, you're just going to get irritated.

HT: That happens to a lot of your work, a lot of intellectuals sit around coffee houses and university lounges... ?

BD: Well, yeah – but not so much with this film. I'm pulling it off, we're going to pull this film off the market and just show it to people who aren't going to worry so. We're just going to show it in rural places because it's a rural film – it isn't for city people who are real sophisticated, unless they still desire to see that sort of thing. But it's more a free-flowing film for people who just want to be carried along, you know? It isn't for someone whose mind is going to stop on this scene, or that scene because they're not going to catch the movie. They're not going to hear it, they're not going to see it. But these are the same people who didn't like what I was singing about in the '60s either.

They don't realise they're the same ones. They were never there when I started out playing and singing anyway. They're just establishment people, even though they might be working for so-called magazines which seem to be involved in a certain lifestyle. They're still pretty comfortable critics, who can't really see beyond their own nose. The movie isn't that bad. But it has brought out intense hatred in some people, the same way as my songs did in the early '60s.

HT: Why does that happen?

BD: I just strike that chord in some people. You know, they have that inside them and my work hits them in a place where they can't fit it into their own logic. These are people with logical minds – they have to have everything explained to them and I don't have time for that and neither does the crowd I play to.

But at this point, it begins to fade away from my experience. I've done it already and I can't defend it – I AM defending it because I think it's a good movie... it's just that the critics don't want to hear of it, they don't want to know that it's art. They want to kill it – they don't want people to see it. But it isn't all what they say it is. I can't tell you what it is, but it isn't what they say it is.

We wouldn't have gone ahead and made this movie (if it was that bad)**. They just don't understand it – their minds are just too locked into their own problems.**

HT: Does that sort of response ever become detrimental to your own output, whether you are making a film or writing a song?

BD: Making a film, it could I mean, if I was a dedicated film-maker and it was all I had going, I would be very affected by what the critics say because the critics keep the people away, you know. If they say it's great, people will go to see it.

But it's got a lot against it to start with – and now, with the critics against it also, that doesn't help it any. It's four hours long and most people don't have that kind of time to sit for a movie during the week, anyway. They've got to get up and go to work the next day and they don't have four hours to get out of a theatre at one o'clock in the morning, So, there's a lot against it. But it's not going to stop me from making another film if I want to.

I'm convinced this movie is going to be around a lot longer than those critics.

HT: Well, that's what happened with your music, isn't it? A lot of critics have gone but the music remains.

BD: Right. A lot of the critics have all gone but the music is still around. So, (laughs)...

HT: Just getting back to way, way people look not just at your films but at your work overall, how do you cope with the Academic sitting around talking about you, dissecting you? Does that bother you?

BD: No, no. That really doesn't have too much to do with me; I don't take part in it. I just don't have the time. Although I can't help but feel sort of... interested.

HT: Is it flattering?

BD: Well... (pause) **It's not for me to say.**

HT: On that point of people talking about your work, I was wondering how close you feel you are to your audience?

BD: Well, in a certain sense I am (close)... **I don't really play games with them. I don't play that game. I lay it down for anyone in the vicinity to pick it up and that's all I've ever done and that's still what I do. But I relate to their feelings.**

HT: Is there any song, or one album, that you're particularly proud of, that you're happiest with?

BD: Ah, many.

HT: You look at it, then, as a whole progressive thing.

BD: Sure...

HT: OK, well out of the studio again – do you ever get worried about going back to face the crowd, after being off the road for a couple of years?

BD: No, not really. It's like yesterday all the time, you know? It doesn't matter how much time passes.

A lot of time has passed between the last tour and this one because I was finishing the movie. I just didn't have the energy to crank it up and go back on the road. But it doesn't take long to get back there...

HT: You've written several "protest" songs that were very important to a lot of people back in the'60s...

BD: Well, I'm still singing them.

HT: Right – but do you think they're still as important today as they were back then?

BD: Sure.

HT: Can you see any change having come from those songs?

BD: Yeah, I can – in a very abstract way. People have told me that they've heard a song of mine and it's changed their lives. Now I can only believe that or disbelieve it – but I know what it is to feel that because I've felt that way myself about some other peoples work.

HT: What work has touched you like that, come so close that it has changed your life?

BD: Well, I'm still awed by Woody Guthrie.

HT: He's the major one, is he, even now?

BD: Well, even now, sure.

HT: Right. Now, again, this might sound a vague kind of thing, a hard thing to pull down. But can you see any social change as a whole coming from your work, rather than just people saying it's changed their individual lives?

BD: Well, maybe it's moved things along a bit. But I don't consider myself one who's going to affect great change in the society of a country. I think it takes more than one singer with a guitar to do that, although every little bit helps, you know? But I'm not interested in changing society. I was never interested in doing that.

I always accepted society for what it was – and just dealt with my own feelings on that.

HT: What do you see long-term? I think in the Cott interview you said the 70s were a transition period from the '60s and into the 70s?

BD: Right, well that was just another link in the chain that we were talking about. In every period of time, there is a great period of revolt. That's what happened in the '60s; maybe some of the changes that were meant to happen in the '70s happened in the '60s, I don't know...

Ah, you can't depend on anything, really – everything is temporary. And so the '80s will be here and the '70s will have been temporary, just the way the '60s were temporary.

HT: Do you have an idea of what you will be doing in the '80s?

BD: I'll be doing the same thing.

HT: Singing and playing?

BD: Yeah – I've done it since I was a kid: I don't see any reason to stop.

HT: Is there anything you haven't done since you started that you wish you had?

BD: Oh, many things that I haven't done... (laughing)... **Oh Lord, yeah – there are many things I haven't done.**

But I have no goals like to be the first man to do this or the first man to do that: the first man to go to the moon, the first man to win the boxing heavyweight title three times. I don't have any of those kind of goals, you know.

HT: Referring to that Cott interview again, you said there really hadn't been any true rock n' roll since Little Richard...

BD: Yeah.

HT: How would you describe your music?

BD: Ah, it's a kind of mixture of rural sophistication.

HT: Country sophistication?

BD: Well (with a grin) **I've been to the city, you know, and I can't avoid that. So it does enter into my music – but the backbone of it comes from the country.**

HT: And you can't see yourself moving into any new area?

BD: No, I'm on a steady rolling path.

HT: Is it a path you are happy with?

BD: It's the only path I know – so it's the most familiar path to me. I'm neither happy nor disillusioned with it.

HT: OK, one last thing. You had a Press Conference recently in Los Angeles, to launch *Renaldo And Clara* and again, it seems as if the media were being very defensive towards you – or you were being very defensive towards them. Then, maybe one works towards the other – but what happened there? From this distance it seemed negative?

BD: Well – what can I say? We did the interviews so people would know there was a movie out, and the whole idea was to let people know that. We didn't think the Press was going to be so antagonistic towards it. But that's alright, you know.

The movie, like I say, is going to be around a lot longer than they are. It's just a shame they can't see that.

1 April 1978
Karen Hughes Interview, Sydney, Australia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 669-679.

This interview between Karen Hughes and Bob Dylan took place at the Boulevard Hotel in Sydney immediately before the 1978 tour concert at the Sydney Showground (this was the last show of the Far East leg). It was originally published in Australia, in *Rock Express*, issue No. 4. as an edited version of the actual interview. A taped version exists and the printed article is a pretty accurate reflection of the interview proper, with the exception that the questions asked were in a very different order to the way they appear in print. Some questions asked were not published (they appear at the end of this section) and, it would appear, a few points printed in *Rock Express* never arose during the interview in the context suggested (these are noted also). It would have been better, perhaps, to transcribe the tape and then note differences from the *Rock Express* article, but the tape in my possession is not of the complete interview – it would seem that Hughes did not switch on her recorder until the interview was under way and the tape is certainly truncated at the end. Certain parts of the printed interview do not appear on the tape and these are probably from the end section of the session which is not available to me. I am unable to find a more complete version.

Karen Hughes was a young Australian journalist, with little track-record who happened to bump into Dylan in Adelaide and found herself being promised an interview for later in the tour.

KH: Sometimes, when you speak, it's as though words are energy and too many words are wasted energy, which could be better put into your songs. Is that how you feel?

BD: Absolutely, yeah. I seldom talk. I seldom like to talk to anybody also because it's false, because when you talk and you speak that's all you're doing. And it has to be direct. I can't do in any other way unless it's direct. And most people don't want to be direct... you find yourself drifting.

KH: Into social conventions of communication?

BD: Yeah, into opinions and ideas. I don't care about those things (pause)**. I do and I don't.**

KH: Or do you care about them if they have feelings to back them up?

BD: Well, feelings yeah, and experience. If they have experience to back them up, alright. It's like somebody telling you about Australia is one thing, and seeing it for yourself is another. I don't like to be told things.

KH: Do you think that you've got to be selfish and shut everything off in order to write?

BD: I think so, don't you?

KH: Yeah, but don't you find that paradoxical?

BD: To what?

KH: Communication.

BD: Well, you need something to communicate to so... no, I don't think so at all.

KH: What kind of outlet does touring provide for you?

BD: It's hard to explain to someone who doesn't do it at all. Since I was just a kid, just a little kid, I used to watch touring bands come through my home town. It always seemed like that was where to go. And the only escape out of it was to get on a bus and go.

KH: What about now, then?

BD: It's the same thing.

KH: Ray Davies once said about touring "when I tour I realise that I have to communicate with the outside. If I don't have an audience and I just write, my mind meanders round

and round the subject, but when I know I have to communicate it to the people, it goes straight to the subject. So I like to tour". Would you agree with that?

BD: I would agree to that. I like to sing to the people. I just don't like to sing into microphones in a studio.

KH: Many people who come to your concerts here regard it as a kind of pilgrimage. Most would like to meet you. What do you feel you have to offer your fans on this kind of individual level?

BD: In India they have men that live in the Himalayas and people make long journeys to sit at their feet. And what happens when they sit at their feet? Nothing. Nothing happens; they're usually given a big dose of silence.

KH: That's an answer of a kind, throwing it back on the questioner.

BD: I don't know whether that's an answer. Sometimes it's better to be quiet than to make a lot of noise; because when you're quiet you're usually more in tune with the birds and the bees and the phantoms of life.

KH: Do you meditate?

BD: Oh, I know a little about all these things, but I don't follow any daily rituals.

KH: You can't see any parallel between your fans seeking a private audience with you and the time long ago when you went to visit Woody Guthrie in a New Jersey hospital?

BD: No. When I went to see him there wasn't many people seeing him. He was sick. No one had heard of him in those days, except just a few people who played folk music. So I went to see him, and it wasn't like seeing the king, you know.

KH: What kind of feeling have you been getting back from the audiences in Australia?

BD: (Pause) **That they understand without having to be told what it's all about, what the music's all about. Why I'm different from all the rest of the groups of people playing around. I mean, I've been at this now a long time. What usually happens is that you are at it until someone else comes along, and I'm still at it. And I'm still going to be at it until someone else comes along.**

KH: But surely no-one else ever comes along that's the same?

BD: Well, that's true, but usually the way things go is that someone else comes out, out of the crowd, of considerable ability who can cover what you're doing and take it another step (pause)**. When the fire's burnt out, I'll just be doing this until the fire's burnt out. Muddy Waters is still playing, he's 65-66. If those people can do it, I don't see why I can't. It takes more out of you when you're young because you don't know yourself that well. If you're dealing in the whole and not just fragments, I don't see why you can't last as long as you want to last. It's not uncommon to be 65 to 70. Muddy Waters, I keep coming back to Muddy Waters because... Lightning Hopkins was very old. I don't know how old he is 'cause he doesn't really say, but he's gotta be beyond 50. Bill Monroe is still going on and he's in his fifties.**

KH: How does the audience reaction here in Australia compare with Japan, New Zealand and the United States?

BD: The States I can't tell you. I haven't been in the States with this show; I've been in the States many times. In Japan they were very reserved, as if something was destroyed. I don't know what. Well, you know what, I know what, everybody knows what it was.

(Steve Soles interrupts to talk with Bob about the purchase of acoustic guitars made from local woods)

BD: Yeah, they were very reserved but maybe there was a language barrier. There probably was; I don't see how there couldn't be really. But they were great. They got better and better with every show. New Zealand was an outdoor show. We played one outdoor show in New Zealand and the audience was very supportive.

KH: How did you find New Zealand as a country.

BD: Well, I was only in Auckland, but the sky was deep.

KH: They have mountains and sea together.

BD: Yeah, the flowers are strange and the birds were interesting. I have never seen those kind before.

KH: Do you find that touring gives you a more direct communication and therefore speeds up the creative process?

BD: One feeds the other.

KH: You were saying touring was a way of getting out of where you lived in Minnesota.

BD: Well, it was an escape, it was like sitting all day... like, when the train rolled through town you always looked at those faces that were peering out of the windows.

KH: Yeah, like when you sit in airports and see all those people going.

BD: Yeah, it was like that; that was it.

KH: How do you feel about Minnesota now; do you feel some kind of attraction?

BD: Yeah, I still go back every now and then.

KH: Because you've got some land there haven't you?

BD: Yeah, I still know some people there so I go back every now and then.

KH: Do you still go to class reunions?

BD: No, I don't do that.

KH: You did once.

BD: I went to one in... er, did I go to one, I went to the 10th one.

KH: When was that, in '63?

BD: '69, I just poked in, poked my face in.

KH: Do you draw much these days?

BD: No.

KH: Why not?

BD: Time.

KH: Would you like to?

BD: Yeah.

KH: What kind of satisfaction do you get out of it?

BD: One time I was doing it all day for a couple of months in New York. This was a couple of years back, it was 74-75. I did it every day from eight till four with a break or something, and it locked me into the present time more than anything else I ever did. More than any experience I've ever had, any enlightenment I've ever had. Because I was constantly being intermingled with myself, and all the different selves that were in there, until this one left, then that one left, and I finally got down to the one that I was familiar with.

KH: Who are your friends these days?

BD: I just have the same old friends that I've always had. People who are akin to me. None of my friends look at me in awe, there's no one hanging around me that thinks I'm the leader. It's hard to explain who they are, they're just people; people like you or me.

KH: You're working very hard at the moment, What are you working on?

BD: Trying to get another album organised.

KH: Can you tell me something about the songs and ideas involved?

BD: They're hard to define. Some ballads, some narrative ballads, and some which aren't. I don't really write about anything, I don't know where these songs come from. Sometimes I'm thinking in some other age that I lived through. I must have had the experiences of all these songs because sometimes I don't know what I'm writing about until years later it becomes clearer to me.

KH: Do you find that, as a composer, you're more like a medium, tuning into something greater happening?

BD: I think every composer does that. No one in his right mind would think that it was coming from him, that he has invented it. It's just coming through him.

KH: What kind of force compels you to write?

BD: Well, any departure, like from my traditional self, will kick it off.

KH: How do you go about composing these songs, working them out?

BD: Well, I usually get a melody. A melody just happens to appear as I'm playing and after that the words come in and out. Sometimes the words come first.

KH: Does it come quickly or do you have to work on it?

BD: Well, it sometimes doesn't come quickly and other times it does come very quickly. I've written songs in five minutes complete, other songs I've had laying around for months.

KH: Does it relate to anything going on outside of you?

BD: No, just when I have the time to finish it or the inspiration or whatever it needs to finish it.

KH: Previously, when you recorded, you just used to go into the studio and do it once, put down each track completely with no overdubbing.

BD: I still do that.

(Dylan at this point noticed Karen Hughes copy of Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald's book *Gypsys Of Britain*)

BD: Yeah, in the gypsy way of life, death is a very happy thing.

KH: It's nice. Lots of nomadic cultures are like that.

BD: Yeah, I can see that point of view.

KH: Didn't you once visit a Gypsy king in the south of France?

BD: Yeah, he was an old man at this time and the person I went to see him with knew him when he was young, not young but ten years earlier, when he was still vital and active. And at that time he had maybe sixteen to twenty wives and over one hundred children. At the time we saw him he'd had a heart attack so the smell of death was all around and most of his family abandoned him. Fifteen or sixteen of his wives had left him and gone, and he only had about two or three children there, so he was pretty much alone. But he still had his scene going; he was into dealing in antiques and junk-metal junk.

KH: Getting back to the album, is there anything else you can tell me about it?

BD: Is this your book? You didn't bring this for me, did you?

KH: No, but you can have it. Would you like it?

BD: Sure, I'd appreciate it.

KH: What kind of arrangements will you be using?

BD: Well, they're all new songs, very simple arrangements.

KH: Similar to what you've done in the past?

BD: Yeah, the arrangements are...

KH: You're not going to change drastically like Joan Baez has on her last album, more towards funk?

BD: I didn't think it was all that funky. Oh, maybe it was for her (pause). **Funk is not something that you capture on record, funk is a way of life. It's a way you feel; you can't just make a funky sounding record. But I know what you mean. Funk has to do with throwing coins into the coffin, that kind of thing.**

KH: Throwing coins into the coffin?

BD: Yeah, funk has to do with different beliefs.

KH: Do you think there's still a lot to say about people that hasn't yet been said?

BD: Individual people yeah, but not people in general. Yeah, you can go on and on about individual people because of the really different characteristics and different attitudes of many people. And then of course, once you get two people together, there's some different types of relationship between different types of people. There are many different levels of how people can relate to one another. Some are casual, some are business, some are romantic, some are...

KH: Do you think that films are an ideal medium to explore that?

BD: I do, yeah.

KH: What's the significance of the title *Renaldo and Clara*?

BD: Well, people keep asking me that. There isn't any more significance to that than what's the significance to *Queen Jane*, why she had that name. Tolstoy wrote a book called *Anna Karenina* and what was the significance of that name? Renaldo is a fox and Clara is supposedly the clear understanding of the future which doesn't exist.

KH: What kind of relationship do you have with women?

BD: What kind of relationships?

KH: How do you view women? What do you get out of relationships with women? Do you think that they're equal or...

BD: Well, I do think that everybody's equal, but, I get past the attraction kinda rather quickly. I don't have time for that anymore.

KH: And then what?

BD: How many relationships can you really have in your life and what kind are they?

KH: Why I brought that up was because the other night you were saying how difficult you found it to have girlfriends because they always had to fit into your life. And I was wondering if, given your belief in equality, you should expect that?

BD: No, but anyone who is in my life at all respects that. That I don't come home every night.

KH: You seem in your songs to have a capacity to love many women. Would you like to have many wives, like the Gypsy king?

BD: Well, yeah, I'd like to have a wife for every degree.

KH: Do you have a home?

BD: A home? I don't have all my possessions in any one place. My clothes are all over the place, but I thrive in different places. I'd love to have a home somewhere ideally.

KH: It can be a person or a feeling or a...

BD: You know that old corny saying "a home is where the heart is"?

KH: It's true.

BD: (Nods)

KH: You once said after visiting Rubin Carter in prison that you left knowing that "this man's philosophy and my philosophy were running on the same road, and you don't meet too many people like that". Well, how do you feel about your fans who buy your records? Surely there's some kind of empathy there?

BD: I'm not sure if they think like me. They might feel as I do, but thinking like me? I don't think we can talk about thought, we just have to talk about feeling. I'm only dealing in the feeling aspect. I'm only dealing with feelings that seem to be unbreakable and the people that follow me and feel that way, feel that. And that is what I think combines everything.

KH: Do you think that in any way the public and the press have made you into something that you're not?

BD: Uh, no, I don't think the public are that gullible. If I wasn't doing what it is that they think I'm doing, I'm sure that no amount of press would be skilful enough to say that I was. What do you think of this shirt?

KH: I like the penguins. Where did you get it?

BD: Off the street.

KH: Here?

BD: Yeah.

KH: Are you going to wear it on stage tonight?

BD: This shirt with the penguins? No, I don't wear my street clothes on the stage anymore. Somebody made up all these clothes. I just got too depressed having to go on in my street clothes all the time.

KH: What's the name of your designer?

BD: A guy in L.A. named Billy. He designed all these clothes.

KH: In the songs that you've been writing, have you written anything about your experiences in Australia?

BD: No, not as a traveler. I haven't had that much time to experience too much.

KH: Have you managed to hear any live bands or artists while you've been here?

BD: No, just on television. But a couple of the guys went to see this guy, Dave Warner, and somebody managed to get a taped cassette and it sounded pretty good.

KH: Have you heard Richard Clapton at all?

BD: Yeah, I heard Richard Clapton in Auckland. I liked him very much. In fact, I tried to get him on the bill for Australia, because you know what the law says that you have to have an Australian support act.

KH: He always cites you as an influence.

BD: I thought he was real good, no pretence.

KH: What do you think characterises the Australians that you know?

BD: Well, in Brisbane, I noticed that everybody has a great ability to laugh.

KH: What about elsewhere?

BD: Elsewhere I find it... I don't think it's a land for explorers.

KH: You mean you don't consider it a land for explorers because there isn't much to discover?

BD: No, I find you have to have permission for everything.

KH: Creatively?

BD: No, just a general feeling in the air. I can't explain it. It's like a feeling when all the windows are closed and you can't open them. And I can't explain it but it seems to be very large too. I've seen a lot more and I've got a lot better feelings for it this time than the last time when I was here and I probably will come back again.

KH: When do you think you'll come back?

BD: Well, the next go around.

KH: You have no idea when that will be?

BD: No, whenever resembles the right time. I like Australia, I like all the towns that we've played in and all the people that we've played to.

KH: Do you think that feeling of having to ask permission for something is linked with the inferiority complex that Australians are reputed to have? Like "no you can't do that because this is Australia" going back to the convict days.

BD: Yeah, because we have some friends. I have a good friend who wanted to come to a concert, who wanted to see this show and he couldn't get a visa – he was coming from Singapore. He couldn't get a visa and it was outrageous of them and he said, well they didn't understand why he just wanted to come for a few days.

KH: If you could think of one image to sum up how you see yourself, what would it be?

BD: During the last one hundred years or the next hundred years?

KH: Both.

BD: I don't know. Basically I just have common qualities. I feel primitive in a lot of ways and in a lot of ways I feel advanced and neither one of these feelings really matter to me. I can imagine every situation in life as if I've done it, no matter what it might be: whether it be self-punishment or marrying my half-sister, I mean, I can imagine, I can feel all these things for some reason. I don't know why.

KH: You once wrote in *Idiot Wind* "what's good is bad, what's bad is good, you'll find out when you've reached the top, you're on the bottom". Does that sum up how you feel about the cyclic way of things?

BD: Yeah, everything that goes out comes around. I feel that way, don't you? I mean, I don't feel that I have to be quarantined for thinking that, that's just a very common way to think. And it isn't all that irregular either, it happens to be true. The simple things which are true usually astound people. "What's good is bad and what's bad is good". It sounds very simple really.

KH: Yeah, it struck me as being very true, that's why I noted it.

BD: Right, it's a piece of raw meat.

KH: Frank Zappa once said he thought the universe was based on a Mobius vortex.

BD: Oh yeah. Well, I can see that. I also find it very uncertain. I had a great flash into what the universe was all about when I saw a man burning a fiddle on a roof, but I can't explain to you what it was that I felt. (See notes at end of this section)

KH: What other artists do you find at the moment musically exciting?

BD: You mean contemporary?

KH: Yeah, doing things now.

BD: Well, everybody can be exciting on a certain night.

KH: But for you?

BD: For me? Usually the old people every time are the only people exciting musically. Of my crowd, Eric Clapton's pretty exciting, but I usually listen to the older records.

KH: You mentioned liking Joan Armatrading.

BD: I like her, yeah. I only have heard her records. I haven't seen her in person. I liked her.

KH: What about Roy Harper?

BD: Isn't he an English... er... Yeah, years ago I heard his records and I liked them.

KH: Ray Davies?

BD: I think he's a genius. Nobody ever asks me about him. I've always been a fan of Ray Davies ever since way hack when. I've always liked him and his brother and that group. (For underlined text refer to notes at end of this section)

KH: What do you admire about the Kinks?

BD: Well, whenever you come up with something, it's like being a chemist. Whenever you come up with something new, you've created something new so I have to admire anyone that can do that. And that song – like I say I don't know what he's doing these days, but he did those songs *You Really Got Me* and the one after that, that was new, that was different. It was new and it had never been done before. So I admire that when I hear that and I appreciate that (pause)**. Yeah. I was going to try and contact him next time I go over there, to see what he was doing.**

KH: Do you find other people working in other areas interesting, scientists for example?

BD: Well, I don't recognise too many of those people so... yeah, people who are working on cancer research, I'm not gonna put that down.

KH: How self-sufficient are you?

BD: In what way?

KH: Mentally, I suppose.

BD: Well, I'm not under any narcotics.

KH: That's not really what I meant.

BD: How do you mean it then?

KH: How much can you exist in isolation without needing other people?

BD: Without drinking any hemlock? I don't know, I really don't know. I mean, I have to get out and see people, but I still need to pull the night shades down too.

KH: With each successive step do you feel that you're coming closer to working out your own destiny?

BD: Yeah, 99% of the time I do.

KH: Do you believe in reincarnation?

BD: In a casual but not astonishing way.

KH: Can you recall other lives?

BD: No, personally I can't.

KH: Not even flashes?

BD: Um, the flash without the desire to... once in a while... no, I can't say as I do. I don't pretend that I have been living in some other time although I admit that it's possible.

KH: Do you find that most things come from within?

BD: Most things come from taking chances.

KH: And you're always taking a lot?

BD: Yeah.

Additional significant sections of the interview found on tape but not in the published version.

As the tape starts up:

KH: I think it sums up how you feel at the moment. Free like a bird, just singing and playing.
BD: Well, it depends on what kind of bird you talk about, you know. There's erm, robins and wrens, owls... some of them can be good and some of them can be not so good. You know, for one, happiness and ensuring the long future and many children and then when you hear a, you know, another kind of bird, it means a different thing.
KH: Well, which one are you?
BD: Me? Well, I can be either one. It depends on what I feel like at the moment.
KH: I was wondering if you exercised a lot 'cause your body's in very good shape.
BD: Um, er... I'm running around so much, you know, that, that... er, I guess it... I don't know. I can't remember how much I eat and what would be my weight.
KH: Yeah.

KH: You said, with the other album, that you were writing about different levels of reality. You said that the other night.
BD: I don't really write about anything. I don't really write about different levels of reality, er...

KH: In the songs that you've been writing, have you written anything about your experiences in Australia?
BD: No. Not as a traveler.
KH: But as a thinker?
BD: No. I haven't had much... I haven't had time to experience too much of what, er... The writer now... in fact, I'm waiting for this guy to call me back. Is he going to call me back?
KH: Yeah. He is.
BD: Do you know his work.
KH: No. I don't. I've never heard of him.
BD: You'd like to hear him.
KH: Do you like his work?
BD: He sent me a song the last time. That was very good.
KH: Yeah. You know, I don't mind if he comes up here while I'm doing this. So you haven't written anything about Australia?
BD: No.

KH: Do you have what I call "mind groupies" – groupies that hang around you trying to live off your mind?
BD: No. There's no-one hanging around me who thinks I'm their leader, you know. It's not that type...
KH: But, they really want to get into your mind.
BD: No. Maybe they do. I'm not aware of it if they are.
KH: You were saying that strange things have been happening to you here like getting lost in Brisbane and just really weird things.
BD: No, it wasn't so strange. One day, I just, er, found myself with nothing to do except walk around and I walked past the bridge on the wrong side of the road and, er... found myself out... pretty far from town. And, er, it was just one of them days, you know, it wasn't... I don't even remember it all that much as, er, nothing very eventful really happened, but... I was just convinced it was due to nothing. I didn't get lost; I wouldn't say that I was lost.
KH: You just ended up somewhere different.

BD: Yeah.

KH: I thought you got somewhere like eight miles in ten minutes.

BD: No, I was eight miles out of town, which was strange. I mean, I kept looking at that bridge, following that bridge because I knew where it was. I knew where the beginning of the bridge was but I... I was looking at the other side of the bridge. So I kept walking around in circles until I got to the other side of the bridge. The other side of the bridge was not far from the (?)... **miles. A long bridge. Very permanent.**

KH: Have you seen many people in Australia – met many people?

BD: Yeah! We've met a lot of people here in Sydney. Well, you know, some people in or out of the shows.

KH: Have you got close to many?

BD: Erm... Not really. But I do have some people that I know last time I was here, that I met, that are here and sort of... they, they, you know. I can't... I haven't gotten close to anybody where I can read their mind and they can read mine.

KH: That made kinda lasting friendships?

Regarding the Mobius vortex question, this concept had to be explained to Dylan before he understood (or seemed to understand).

22 May 1978
Robert Hilburn interview for *Los Angeles Times*

Source: *Los Angeles Times*, 28 May 1978.

Bob Dylan Opens Up on Bob Dylan
BY ROBERT HILBURN

Bob Dylan the legend seemed unusually relaxed and approachable as he strolled down a Santa Monica street this week. There were few signs of the brooding, reclusive image that has often surrounded him.

It was 11 a.m. and he wanted some coffee. The restaurant closest to his two-story rehearsal hall wasn't open yet, so he headed for a nearby sidewalk café.

On the way, several people recognized Dylan, who opens his first L.A. concert engagement in four years Thursday night at the Universal Amphitheater.

A teen-ager wearing a faded Jackson Browne T-shirt waved as he zipped past Dylan on a skateboard. A man in a white MG convertible slowed for a closer look. At the café, a woman at the next table stared for a half hour and then asked in a French accent, "Aren't you Bob DillON?"

It was inconceivable a few years ago to find Dylan on such public view. An interview was even more unlikely. After a near-fatal 1966 motorcycle accident, Dylan retired to upstate New York to recuperate and—some say—hide from the pressures of rock superstardom.

But here he was—just two days before his 37th birthday—speaking openly and intensely about his music, image, financial troubles and the critics who panned his "*Renaldo & Clara*" film.

"Reading the reviews of the movie, I sensed a feeling of them wanting to crush things. Those reviews weren't about the movie. They were just an excuse to get at me for one reason or another.

"I think I know what happened. In the '60s, *Time*, *Newsweek*—all those magazines—started calling me the 'father of the revolution,' 'the folk-rock king' and all that stuff. That's what created this 'mythical Bob Dylan' thing.

"So, now, the magazines must figure they made a mistake back then and they've gotta take it down some. I don't know if they'll be successful, but what they say has nothing to do with me. It didn't in the '60s and it doesn't now."

Dylan's retreat in 1966 followed years that overflowed with the pressures of touring, recording and living up to the enormous expectations created by such gripping, anthem-like songs as "*Blowin' in the Wind*," "*Like a Rolling Stone*" and "*Times They Are A-Changin'*."

However much he denied the role, he was looked to as the spokesman for a generation actively involved in the civil rights movement and other areas of sweeping social change.

"I was on the road 150-200 nights a year in those days," he said. **"Everything was happening so fast. It was a real danger. I couldn't see how fast. I was moving. I was looking at a wall and I didn't know it But I was racing after something in my music and I hadn't gotten there yet..."**

By 1968, Dylan was making records again, but they lacked the intensity and social comment of the early days. Some complained about the changes in his music Some attacked him as having originally used "protest" music just to gain an audience.

Through it all. Dylan kept to himself. He didn't tour again until 1974. But he was bigger than ever. More than six million ticket orders were received for his 40 concerts that year. He followed that highly acclaimed series of shows with the Band in 1975 with the more informal Rolling Thunder Revue tour. But he'll be on the road more this year than at any time since the '60s.

The sold-out seven-night Amphitheater engagement is part of a worldwide tour that has already included Japan and Australia, and next heads to Europe. Dylan also will return to the United States for an extensive tour this fall.

Part of the reason for the concert activity, he admits, is financial. **"I've got quite a few debts to pay off,"** he said, smiling slightly. **"I had a couple of bad years. I put a lot of money into the movie** ("*Renaldo & Clara*")**, built a big house... and there's the divorce. It costs a lot to get divorced in California."**

But Dylan also said he realizes he needs to do more live shows.

"Movies fascinate me, but they'll never take the place of performing. If you are a musician, you need that feedback. Elvis did 30 movies or whatever, but they never were enough for him. He eventually had to go back on stage. Once you pick up the guitar, you can't put it down.

"It's like I have to laugh at Robbie (the Band's Robbie Robertson) **in '*The Last Waltz*' when he talks about giving up the road. It ain't gonna happen. Once you're on it, you're on it..."**

"*Renaldo & Clara*"—Dylan's recent four-hour mix of concert and other footage—was both a critical and box-office disaster. The film closed in most theaters after just a few weeks. Critics not only attacked the film, but seemed in many cases to take after Dylan himself. Indulgent was one of the gentler phrases used.

Dylan now hopes to put out a more workable, two-hour version of "*Renaldo & Clara*" soon—but he stands by the original film.

"I can't say the critical reaction surprised me. Look, you get 10 people and seven of them aren't going to like it. That's the percentage I've been accustomed to with my music. Of the three who are left, one might love it, one might hate it, one might just blank out or something.

"But I was disappointed that the critics couldn't get beyond the superficial elements. They thought the movie was all about Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Sara Dylan... and wasn't.

"It had nothing to do with those people. But that's what kept coming back in review after review. It's like the old days. The times haven't changed. They're the same people who didn't like what I was singing about in the '60s."

Still, Dylan acknowledges he learned something from "*Renaldo & Clara*" about film-making. **"I know the importance of a good script. We thought we had a script with '*Renaldo & Clara*' but it may have been too abstract.**

"I'm trying to get some people together, but I don't know how far we're gonna get. I realize I can't do the whole thing. I can only do one thing at a time. A movie is too big. I'll never try to combine a tour and a movie again."

Back in the rehearsal hall, Dylan slipped a tape of his upcoming album into the cassette machine. Titled "*Street Legal*," the LP will be released next month. Dylan tapped his foot and commented about some of the songs and the arrangements. He seemed especially pleased.

"On this album, I took a few steps backward, but I also took a bunch of steps forward because I had a lot of time to concentrate on it. I also had the band sounding like I want it to sound. It's got that organ sound from '*Blonde on Blonde*' again. That's something that has been missing."

Because of the much-publicized break-up of his 12-year marriage, several of the songs on "*Street Legal*" are likely to be interpreted as reflections on that period. But he denied the link.

"I went beyond that" he said. **"I cut that whole experience right off. I had some songs last year which I didn't record. They dealt with that period as I was going through it. For relief, I wrote the tunes. I thought they were great. Some people around town heard them. I played them for some friends. But I had no interest in recording them. I wanted to start off new on the album."**

Listening to the music, Dylan spoke of his direction and objectives as a songwriter.

"My music comes from two places: white hillbilly music—Roscoe Holcomb, stuff like that—and black blues—people like Son House, Charley Patton, Robert Johnson. These are the two elements I've always related to best, even now.

"Then, all of a sudden in the '60s, I heard Woody Guthrie, which just blew my mind—what he did with a lyric. So, I stopped everything and learned his songs.

"That's what kept me going. I wanted to see how far I could take those elements, how well I could blend them together. Sometimes my music has gone a little to one side, then it drifts back to the other, but I'm always headed in the same direction. That's what I hear on this album, too.

"The people who have been into my music realize that. They didn't need the magazines to tell them something was happening. They discovered it for themselves. That's why I have a real strong following. That's why I'm not really surprised when the shows sell out. It's no mystery to me. My audience and I go back a long way."

Dylan acknowledged, however, the difficulty of keeping perspective amidst the acclaim and adoration.

"I know I've played some shows that were awful and people acted like they were great," he said, tugging occasionally at his dark curly hair. **"It saddens you when that happens. You get depressed about it. But then I've played some shows that I thought were everything they should be and people would still find something to complain about.**

"So, you have to learn to trust your own judgment You have to remember what your purpose is and walk that thin line. You've got to guard against the road getting too wide, and things put on the road to make you stumble or turn back. You have to keep moving. I feel like I'm moving real well now. There's a lot going on."

Despite some exquisite love songs that would have made him an acclaimed songwriter even if he had never written about social conditions in America, Dylan—to many—continues to be looked upon chiefly as a spokesman and commentator.

So, it was only natural to ask him—the most American pop music voice of the 1960s (and beyond)—about the 1970s. He took advantage of the question to again define his artistic position.

"The peculiar thing about the '70s is they're almost over and no one has gotten around to figuring them out," he said.

"The '70s aren't as explosive as the '60s where people were laying themselves on the line every day, but people have to understand everything changes.

"Look at the so-called leaders from the '60s. What ever happened to them? There was Abbie Hoffman, who you never hear from any more. He could be sitting at the next table for all we know. There was Tom Hayden, who's running a children's camp. And: Jerry Rubin, who is a sociologist or whatever.

"What did those 'leaders' really do? Maybe they did something then, but what are they doing now? That's the same thing a lot of people say about me: 'He did it then, but what is he doing now...'

"Well, I'm doing what I always did: I'm still playing my guitar and singing my songs."

26 May 1978
Garth Pearce Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, p. 1039.

As yet, I have no idea where, or exactly when, this interview by Garth Pierce was conducted. It was published in the *Daily Express* of 26th May 1978 under the heading –

THE SINGER: "I DON'T WORRY ANYMORE"

The times are changin' for Bob Dylan who celebrated his 37th birthday this week.

The weary folk hero of the sixties arrives to do six concerts in London's massive Earls Court next month with a plague problem weighing heavily on his narrow shoulders.

A reputed £1 million has been lost on a film called *Renaldo and Clara*. More millions will go on a divorce settlement to his wife Sara. And his recent sell-out tour of Japan and Australia – forced on him – some say by money problems – has not been a critical success.

Dylan's unwillingness to take to the road regularly has added to the brooding, somewhat mystical qualities which still help him to cash in hugely at the box office. Even though his talent has been judged by many to be in sharp decline. All 96,000 tickets for his British concerts have been snapped up. But what sort of Bob Dylan will his ageing fans see?

"I don't feel old," he says. **"I don't really think in terms of growing up."**

If the pressures of being feted as a musical genius have ever taken their toll, he makes light of it: **"It doesn't really worry me,"** he says. **"Morning always comes so quickly that I don't have a chance to think about it. I don't have that youthful desire to go out and prove that I can conquer the masses. A tour like this is just a tour. There is no great meaning to it. I am not sure about the event and what it means to people but to us** (Dylan and the backing group) **we are just going on playing."**

For a man who produced the classics of the sixties, like '*Positively Fourth Street*,' '*Desolation Row*,' '*Like A Rolling Stone*' and '*Just Like A Woman*,' there has been an alarming dearth of good material in recent years. He shrugs off suggestions of being a man out of step with 1978.

"You must have belief and a purpose," he says. **"You must believe that you can disappear through walls. Without that belief you're not going to become a very good rock singer. I try to create art and I wrote a lot of those songs by gut feeling. I don't think in terms of economics or status or what people think of me one way or another."** As long, his critics might add, as they keep passing the pound notes through the turnstiles.

16 June 1978
Philippe Adler Interview, Royal Garden Hotel, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 445-449.

Dylan was interviewed by Philippe Adler of the French magazine *L'Expresse* on June 16th, the day of the second Earl's Court concert. The interview took place in Dylan's suite at the Royal Garden Hotel. The article was published as a major cover-story in issue 1408, 3 – 9th July, timed to appear the week of the Paris shows (first show at Paris Pavillion was July 3rd).
I've used the excellent translation of Sue Allen as my starting point but have made a number of corrections to this following comparison with the genuine *Express* article.

BOB DYLAN PARLE

<< L'amnésie est terminée... >> Dans un entretien exclusif avec Philippe Adler, Bob Dylan a rompu un silence de douze ans. Une confession à chaud, entre deux concerts à Londres.

PA: When you came on stage last night in London you received a fantastic ovation. Intoxicating, wasn't it?

BD: No, because I didn't think it was for me. It was an ovation for someone or something else.

PA: In the English press this morning they're talking about you as a myth, a living legend, an electric poet...

BD: I don't care. It even annoys me a little. As soon as people start sticking a label on me that puts up a barrier between the public and me.

PA: Now you seem to be returning to the stage. Does that mean that the journey through the wilderness has ended?

BD: Yes, I believe so. I'm back on the tracks.

PA: Is it for the money?

BD: No. Of course I need the money and I know how to spend it, but basically it's because I wanted to do the only thing I've ever known how to do; sing and play. I'm a musician that's all.

PA: We won't need to wait another 12 years to see you again?

BD: No, no. The amnesia is finished (laughs)**.**

PA: In your new band there's a lot of percussion...

BD: That's essential for me. My songs need a lot of rhythm. Next time I'll come with three drummers.

PA: It's been said that in taking on three pretty singers you're paving the way to Las Vegas.

BD: Pfff!

PA: Are you going to present the same program in Paris as in the States and in London?

BD: I still don't know. I might put in a few more songs from the new album, now that it's out. But that means I'll have to take out other ones, and I never know which ones to take out. There are so very many.

PA: Legend has it that your very first song was dedicated to Brigitte Bardot.

BD: That's right.

PA: Could you sing it again for me?

BD: I can't remember it anymore. I only know that it was very short (laughs)**.**

PA: How old were you when you bought your first guitar?

BD: I was 12. It was an electric guitar. I was mad about Presley, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and I played rock. And then, one day, I heard a record by Odetta, and everything changed.

PA: I thought that you had been influenced at first by Woody Guthrie?

BD: No, it was the rock and rollers, then Odetta, The Kingston Trio, Harry Belafonte, The Carter Family. Guthrie only came along afterwards but what a shock! I learned off by heart more than 200 of his songs.

PA: When you gave up the folk guitar for the electric, your early fans didn't appreciate it.

BD: Oh, no! They threw me off the stage in Newport in '65 (laughs)**. After that I got used to the whistles. I was entitled to them in Paris as well as London in '66. Deep down I think that people enjoy whistling. Like at a ball game.**

PA: Why have you changed your name from Zimmerman to Dylan?

BD: Why do people change their towns, nationalities, lives? I don't possess this name. It just fell off my tongue one day, it rained on me, I kept it.

PA: Is there any link with Dylan Thomas?

BD: No, none at all! If I were a fan of Dylan Thomas I would have sung his poems or I would be called Bob Thomas.

PA: You've always remained very mysterious about your childhood. At one time you even pretended to be an orphan. Your biographies say that your father was a chemist or a miner or an electrician...

BD: No, none of these. My father was a very active man, but he was stricken very early by an attack of polio. The illness put an end to all his dreams I believe. He could barely walk. When we moved from the North of the country two of his brothers who were electrical fitters, opened a shop and they took him with them so he could mind the shop.

PA: Before that, had he been a student?

BD: No. You know my grand father had come over from Russia in the 1920s. He was a peddler and made shoes. He had 7 sons and one daughter, well, my father never had the time to go to college. He used to do odd jobs to bring home some money to his mother. He died in '68.

PA: Your motorcycle accident in '66 happened like a sign of destiny, at a time when you were burning the candle at both ends.

BD: I couldn't have kept going for long at that pace...

PA: Well, there was this long period when you seemed to disappear into thin air.

BD: Yes. That was the amnesia (laughs)**.**

PA: After Paris are you going to take a rest?

BD: No, not at all! I'm going to Sweden, then I return to England for a gigantic festival in the open air on a disused airfield. They are expecting more than 100,000 people. After that I'm on tour in America until the end of the year. Then I'll cut a new album.

PA: Where and when do you write?

BD: Anywhere and anytime.

PA: Do you often have ideas for songs?

BD: All the time. I put all my ideas down on paper.

PA: Do you have a note book?

BD: No, loose leaves. Like you and the same pen as you (laughs)**.**

PA: Do you think that your recent songs touch on current events like those ones when you were starting out?

BD: Yes, I think so. This will be even more obvious with the ones on my next album. I think these really ought to reflect the way people think about things today. At least the people I see.

PA: Who are they?

BD: Musicians, painters. People who travel. I go everywhere where there are people. I listen to them talking. I listen to them chatting and I pick up on their feelings.

PA: A song like *Times They Are A-Changin'* is 15 years old now. You're still singing it. Doesn't that bother you?

BD: Each time I sing it, I feel like I wrote it the day before.

PA: What do you think of punks?

BD: To be honest, I don't know much about this movement. I've heard some records and I've seen some groups. I think that above all they're releasing a lot of energy and that's important. But, to be frank, I mostly listen to good music. Rhythm & Blues, Hillbilly, Blues.

PA: And those dark glasses you wear all the time, should they be seen as a sign of aggression?

BD: No, of insecurity, above all else (laughs)**. I really think that I wear them because I like wearing them.**

PA: You once said that you were a "guy under 30" and that you were counting on staying that way as long as possible. How do you feel now that you're 37?

BD: Well, now I'm a guy under 15 years old!

PA: During your "amnesia" some of your fans formed a "Dylan Liberation Front" to force you to come out from your retreat, to take up your engagements. At one point they made a lot of noise about you having bought shares in an arms factory that was making napalm bombs.

BD: I've never done that (shrugging his shoulders)**. I've got my own armory at home** (laughs)**. I've got revolvers, pistols like all Americans. But there's no napalm, no, no.**

PA: Are you still living in your amazing house at Point Zuma?

BD: Yes, but I'm not often there. It's just a place to sleep. Why is that difficult to believe.

PA: It appears to be topped by a rather mysterious copper dome. People have said that it's an eagles nest, an observatory, a peeled onion. Which is right?

BD: A landmark, so that I can recognize it (laughs)**.**

PA: At the time of your divorce from Sara, didn't your wife want to keep it?

BD: No. She'd gone elsewhere. Anyway, she hadn't lived there much.

PA: Do you see your children often?

BD: Everytime I get the chance to.

PA: What would you do if you learnt that one of them was taking drugs?

BD: Really... (He looked like he was going to give a couple of claps, almost tenderly, then a burst of laughter)**. It depends on what kind of drug he was taking. You know. You can only talk, explain, people want to go through their own experiences themselves. In any case I've also acted in this way myself** (pause)**. They need to have enough experience, a sense of their identity to have confidence in themselves. As for me, that was different, people were taking drugs and saying that they are creating these experiences. But I never got hooked on drugs. Yet I took every sort** (grimace)**. In any case you can't lay down the law to make people live according to your own rules,** (a silence)**. For my children I don't know what I would do. Perhaps they have already taken them, I don't know** (laughs)**. My oldest daughter has undoubtedly already taken them but I haven't been on the spot.**

PA: Knowing the influence that you exercise over millions of young people, don't you think it's dangerous to go on singing *Everybody Must Be Stoned*? (sic)

BD: But that song has lot of other meanings.

PA: Maybe, but it does have a precise one.

BD: Marijuana isn't a drug like the others (a pause)**. Today there are drugs that are a lot more dangerous than in my time. There's one called "Angel Dust". It's a tranquilizer that they give to elephants. People take it to get high** (a pause)**. I think you can do what you want up until the moment when you realize you have to be responsible for yourself, or otherwise you've had it.**

PA: Did your film *Renaldo & Clara* get a rather cool reception in the States?

BD: At first I was disappointed about it, now I don't care. They didn't want to be impressed, but I didn't make this film to impress anybody. And then, they took exception to it, they only wanted to see the affair of Bob, Sara and Joan Baez — as though the film had nothing to see but that. I know that's a beautiful film. People need to get used to it that's all.

PA: Is it still being shown over there?

BD: Yes, you can see it in some places. Let's say that it's not in the process of engulfing the planet, but if one looks around one can see it (laughs)**.**

PA: Rumor has it that you're preparing a shorter version?

BD: It's done. Now there's a choice between a *Renaldo & Clara* of 4 hours and one of 2 hours (laughs)**.**

PA: As compensation, it was rather well received at the last Cannes festival.

BD: Oh yes, what do you want... Nobody's a prophet in his home country (laughs)**.**

PA: Are you going to make another?

BD: Yes. Painting has always been my passion. For me a film is a painting that comes alive from a wall. If Michelangelo and Cezanne were alive today they would be film directors.

PA: You often list Henry Miller amongst your influences.

BD: Yes. I think that he's the greatest American writer.

PA: I believe you've met him. What did you talk about?

BD: We played table tennis (laughs)**.**

PA: You're still keeping to your definition of the role of the artist to instill disillusion into the world?

BD: Yes

PA: And President Carter, you've even met him.

BD: Yes, he's a friend. I once said his heart's in the right place. That's important.

PA: Have you seen him again recently?

BD: No. He hasn't phoned me (laughs)**.**

PA: If President Giscard D'Estang offered you an invitation during your stay in Paris, what would be your reaction?

BD: Oh, but I don't think he would ever have heard of me.

PA: You're surely mistaken. Once he invited Leonard Cohen.

BD: Oh, good! Well, he'll have to see about that with my agent (laughs)**.**

PA: Have you met many people since you've been on tour?

BD: No, I'm working. I haven't got the time.

PA: Do you take your meals in the hotel or go out?

BD: I don't like restaurants or hotels. I enjoy eating when I know the person who's prepared the meal.

PA: Have you friends in France?

BD: Yes, some in Paris, Marseilles, St Maries-des-la-Mer, but I repeat that unfortunately I'm here to work (a pause)**. There's only one person I'm sure I want to meet in France, that's Mr President. Now there's a really good guy.**

PA: When are you going to see him?

BD: Where and when he wants. I am entirely at his disposal. Definitely and without discussion (laughs)**.**

PA: Did you say that failure was preferable to success?

BD: Yes, because failure engenders success, whereas success is the end of the line. I've never had the feeling of having succeeded and I'm very happy about that. If I had had that feeling, I would no longer be around. Already long gone.

PA: Do you believe in God?

BD: Let's say, as he shows himself.

PA: Do you often think about death?

BD: Yes, often.

PA: Do you feel you're ready to face it?

BD: Me? Oh, no not at all. I've still got some time, eh? (laughs)**.**

20 June 1978
Ray Coleman Interview, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1041-1045.

Ray Coleman of *Melody Maker* and Max Jones met Dylan backstage after his final show at Earls Court. The brief interview, wrapped up in a review of the Earls Court concerts, appeared in *Melody Maker's* July 1[st] issue.

WHY DYLAN STAYS FOREVER YOUNG
Why Coleman wraps up six nights of Dylan in London – with comments from the man himself...

"I'm glad these songs mean as much to you as they mean to me." Bob Dylan said that. He said it to his adoring audience on the final night of his six-concert stretch at Earls Court, London – just after he had sung *It 's All Right Ma, (I'm Only Bleeding*). He got an heroic reception, and he thanked us. Warmly.

The Dylan of old used to treat his songs and his audience with virtual disdain. Ten years ago, to have imagined him admitting any real care for them would have been unthinkable. That comment spoke volumes for the man's maturity.

The same new quality was evident later. An hour or so after that final show, Dylan was talking backstage to my colleague Max Jones and me and one of his remarks ran roughly like this –

"Doing these concerts here has made me realise about British audiences. They're really something different – they actually come for the words and for the songs. That's what's missing back home. There, they tend to come for..."

The event?

"Yeah, not so much the music, more the side-show."

For committed Dylan die-hards like me, it was all a little hard to swallow; on all his concerts he had been diplomatically thanking the audiences. Tonight, he had confessed that the songs meant a lot to him. Now, he was getting close to talking about wonderful British audiences.

My mind flashed back to an *MM* interview with David Bowie recently in which David had said he had been disillusioned by Bob's quote to him: **"Wait till you hear my new album."** Bowie said, in effect, that he could scarcely take that kind of Las Vegas cliché from Dylan, of all people.

All this was a far cry from the monosyllabic Dylan of yore. Ten or more years ago, a "yes" or, more likely, "no" from the man would have been regarded as a major political speech. Now, he was looser, talking to the MM about anything from his current musical inclinations, reminding us and himself about his roots and registering unmistakably sincere delight at what had happened to him in Britain...

Max Jones, a cohort of Bob's since long before the musician exploded on to the world stage, commented on the extent of the band's involvement in Dylan's stage act today, and Bob responded immediately with great enthusiasm.

He had taken ages he said, to find the right musicians, but now was elated at what they'd done for him and for the old material. **"They're all the same songs,"** he said, in what seemed to me a direct quote from his Albert Hall speech in 1966.

<u>Famous half-smile</u>
"The songs will go on for ever. People like them done over and over, and me, too. But finding these players gave me the chance to develop all the old stuff. I enjoy them this way and people seem to as well."

"If we wanted them sung as on the record," he added, **"go and listen to the albums."** He managed that famous half-smile.

We talked of The soul-and-blues inflections in certain passages of his act, notably in *Going Going Gone*, which closed the first half, and in *I Shall Be Released*, which carried a definite gospel flavour, and even theatrical hand gestures by Bob.

"What I like about the band is that I can get everything I want from them – the blues, soul, country, cajun, American mountain music – everything. This is NOT just a rock band. Soul has always been in me, and I've been listening to Red Prysock, the greatest horn player I've ever heard."

"And then years ago I used to go to the Apollo (in Harlem) **and listen to the Bobby Blue Band – I went there night after night."**

"Lonnie Johnson and Muddy – these people are the guys I've come up with, so the soul element is a natural."

Mention of the girl back-up trio of Helena Springs, Jo Ann Harris and Carolyn Dennis - introduced jokingly on stage by Dylan as, variously, **"my cousin, my fiancée, my ex-girlfriend"** – seemed to elicit a very slight glint in Dylan's eye, as he stood talking to us just outside his backstage caravan.

We commented on their visual appeal, as well as vocal quality, and Dylan said he was getting round to thinking that that aspect of the show was **"a bit Las Vegas."**

"But there's nothing wrong with a bit of sex in the show, is there?" asked the painfully, honest Max Jones.

"I turned round in Japan and saw a pair of breasts on stage... I thought then that something's gotta be done about this." replied Bob enigmatically.

Getting back to the music, he said that on some nights – but not on this final one – he had included *To Ramona*, and this was another example of how thrilled he was with the soulful violin playing of David Mansfield.

"I think he's the best guy around on that instrument, but they're all special to me."

He said it had taken him a year to put the band together and many of the arrangements had been conceived and executed by Steven Soles, the tasteful guitarist/vocalist who also fronts the critically-acclaimed Alpha Band.

Throughout the week of concerts. Dylanologists had been collecting anecdotes and comparing shows.

On this final night he had been more communicative than ever. His **"thank you's"** had been voluminous. At the end of Mansfield's mind-blowing solo which ended *All Along The Watchtower*, Dylan crept up to the mike amid fantastic applause and said dryly: **"I taught him that solo."**

Before that performance. Dylan said: **"This song is dedicated to the late Jimi Hendrix."**

Introducing the heavily orchestrated version of *Ballad Of A Thin Man* – which, incidentally, gave him the cue for more animated gestures than ever, acting out the role of interviewer and musician as in the story-line – Dylan said: **"I wrote this song 15 years before the ballad of 'Short People'."** (An aside alluding to Randy Newman's recent hit.) We were left to make what we wished of the remark.

Sparklers, candles stuck into drink cans and cigarette lighters had combined to set Earls Court alight long before the end of the show was in sight on Tuesday, and Dylan was moved to say: "**Careful with those lights – the place will burn down."**

Musically, this final night was special for reasons different from those which made every concert remarkable.

Different lines of his songs came over with fresh force. *Tangled Up In Blue*, read so majestically under a solo spotlight on nights one and four, was not so dramatic or meaningful on the final show, partly because Bob's innovative ideas with bending the notes weren't so hot (but it's worth registering here that Dylan below his best is still incomparably superior to his nearest competitor).

Songs that clinched the final night were *Just Like A Woman*, handled with every ounce of persuasiveness and delivered with surprising gusto by Bob and the band.

Rarely, if ever, has the song been so brilliantly blown apart and knitted together again to make a beautiful, meaningful tapestry of words: "She makes love just like a woman... and she breaks just like a little girl" never sounded more potent than in the hands of their author.

Mighty roar

There are those who prefer his original, simpler version. But, like Dylan says, a good song should be able to stand re-defining, or else it's dead.

And his harmonica solo was a riveting joy, bringing the ecstatic crowd to its feet with a mighty roar.

It's All Right Ma, (I'm Only Bleeding) was another stand-out. Again, he shook the old version, from the *Bringing It All Back Home* album, to its foundation and spat out the song in one hell of a hurry.

It gained urgency from this treatment, and the band rocked away handsomely behind the garrulous story-line, but there was no mistaking his own enjoyment of this recycle, and there was no mistaking the crowd's response at the line that became peculiarly finger-pointing towards himself: *"I got nothing, Ma, to live up to..."* Untrue, of course, but he was doing it with aplomb.

Shelter From The Storm was excellent, too – but on this my third Dylan attendance at Earls Court, I was struck by the power of one particular song from his new album, *Street Legal*.

This was *Señor (Tales Of Yankee Power)*. Brooding and sinister, the lyrics are, on close inspection, as desperately evocative of a mood as anything he's written.

"Can you tell me where we're heading... is it Lincoln County Road or Armageddon?" he asks – and we are left to surmise the target at which he points his finger, yet again. At a directionless America, presumably.

It's a haunting, bluesy song, the saxophone touching the right spots to wailing effect, and Dylan's voice reminding us of much of his early work: *'This place don't make sense to me no more... can you tell me what we're waiting for Señor?'*

Splendidly meaty stuff, as is his assumed song of his recently broken marriage, *Baby Stop Crying*.

Musically, then, there were highlights aplenty, and each observer will carry his or her own highlights of Dylan's concerts in the memory for a good few months.

Offstage, and backstage, it seemed a fairly orderly week, with Dylan's much-touted interest in British reggae arousing excitement among the national press. The singer did no formal interviews, hardly surprising in view of the fact that when he emerged early in the week from the Royal Garden Hotel, Kensington, a national foot-in-the-mouth type yelled: "You're doing it for the money, aren't you, Bob?"

That incredible piece of insensitivity reduced everyone's interview chances from nil to nil-plus... and anyway, oddly enough, most artists do perform for money. Dylan, unlike some, actually earned his.

So Dylan came and conquered and enjoyed Merger at Dingwalls, propped up by bodyguards, and talked informally to Max Jones and me and had a conversation with Michael Gray, whose review appeared in the MM last week, and who had written *Song And Dance Man*, a book on Bob's songs.

<u>Articulate mood</u>

Dylan went for dinner with Robert Shelton, the American writer who first noted his appearance at Gerde's Folk City, in New York, in 1961, and then gave Dylan his first ever review – in the *New York Times*. (Shelton is still at work on the definitive biography, and plans to complete it after Blackbushe.)

Dylan also phoned Shusha, the discerning Persian folk singer who has recorded some of his songs, and who closes her act with *Forever Young* just like Dylan. He told her how much he liked her work and that she ought to perform in America.

Shusha, who saw his final concert and was naturally impressed, found Dylan in articulate mood and seemed to have struck up an intelligent friendship with an artist she has studied a long time.

The only moment in which Dylan made a mistake with an audience was when he said: **"Goodnight – see you tomorrow,"** not realising that most of the people at Earls Court would not in fact be returning the next night.

But if, as I suspect, that was his only error of communication during six stupendous performances, then the world's most important rock artist clinched it impeccably.

Here were no ordinary occasions. A seer of the Sixties, his reputation slightly blurred for some by the mere passing of time, had come to test our patience. And he emerged not just unscathed, but with a greater reputation. Because he'd risked everything by recycling the songs. And he'd proved they still stand up.

When Dylan said, then, after his final show, to the *MM* that he was genuinely energised by the British reaction, it was patently sincere, and no Hollywood jive.

In America, remember, his records are rarely played on the radio and he does not have the same legendary status as here; it appears that we take musical poets more seriously.

A mind-blowing week it had been. See you at Blackbushe indeed, Bob Dylan!

20 June 1978
Robert Shelton interview, Knightsbridge Restaurant, London, UK

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 451-457.

Robert Shelton interviewed Dylan at a Knightsbridge restaurant after his final Earls Court show. The interview was published in *Melody Maker* on July 29th 1978.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE ON YOUR OWN?
BOB DYLAN TALKS TO ROBERT SHELTON

"How does it feel?" I teased Bob Dylan with his own famous question. He'd just finished his sixth triumphant concert at Earls Court. Dylan insisted the ovations and the rave reviews were for his work:

"It's not me. It's the songs. I'm just the postman. I deliver the songs. That's all I have in this world are those songs! That's what all the legend, all the myth, is about – my songs."

We were huddled at a corner table in a Knightsbridge restaurant. Dylan was filled with nervous energy, but his dark glasses gave him some refuge. Although I've known and studied him for 17 years, it is always exciting to be around him. The air still crackles a bit when he walks into a room.

"Are you getting this?" he asked me, so I pulled out my notebook. I'd had a couple of informal backstage interludes with him, but now he wanted this conversation mostly "for the record." He knew I wouldn't ask him about God, how he enjoyed his divorce, or if he dedicated his first song to Brigitte Bardot. It was a conversation, not an inquisition. Dylan speaks with the same sort of rhythm that he brings to his singing. Sometimes his lines are gentle. Sometimes they bite:

"I started writing those songs... before, you know... before I could walk! George Harrison told me last night that I'd be singing '*It's Alright, Ma*' when I'm 90! Nobody else gives my songs life. It's up to me to do it... But those songs have a life of their own, too. Jimi Hendrix sang them... Stevie Wonder, Van Morrison and Elvis Presley have sung them," Dylan continued.

How did he react to the death of Elvis Presley?

Dylan: **It was so sad. I had a breakdown! I broke down... one of the very few times. I went over my whole life. I went over my whole childhood. I didn't talk to anyone for a week after Elvis died. If it wasn't for Elvis and Hank Williams, I couldn't be doing what I do today.**

Presley died young, last summer. The great country singer, Hank Williams, died even younger – at 29 in 1953. Dylan's adolescence was death-haunted as one after the other of his idols – James Dean and Buddy Holly – died long before their time. Dylan sang about death at 19, outlined his own epitaphs at 23. We all feared he'd die young, too, but he cheated the undertaker and hitch-hiked back from the cemetery.

In his great new song, *Where Are You Tonight? (Journey Through Dark Heat)*, the narrator expresses disbelief that he's still alive. Yet we've just heard Dylan bring new rampant life back to his classic old songs. When he sang *Forever Young* it was for his audiences, but also for his children, and, probably, for himself, as well.

There are differences between Dylan's mystique in America today and his grip on the audiences of Britain, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and France. He paid his highest tribute to the warmth of the English audiences at his final Earls Court concert, saying:

"I'm glad these songs mean as much to you as they do to me... Actually, I'm thinking of moving up to Liverpool!"

After that remarkable turnout at Blackbushe, he told 250,000 picnickers: **"I hope to get to see you real soon. I wanna come back."**

I asked him about the differences between audiences. Dylan told me: **"Some American audiences and critics don't find the depth in my work, in my songs, like they do elsewhere..."**

He had praised the sophistication of British audiences to me earlier: **"Why, there were blues singers who were working as janitors in America until they came here to England."**

Would he ever really consider living any place but America? **"Yes I would,"** Dylan replied thoughtfully. **"Creatively, I couldn't live anywhere but America, because I understand the tone behind the language. I'd love to live somewhere else, but only for a while. I lived in Mexico for three months..."** he said, referring to 1973, when he was writing music for, and playing the role of Alias in the film *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*. He added: **"I wrote my fourth album** ("Another Side of Bob Dylan") **in Greece, but that was still an American album."**

Dylan spoke with animation about the great feelings he'd gotten **"in spring... two birthdays ago"** at a gypsy festival at Sainte-Marie-de-la-Mer, France, where flamenco music filled the air. He'd also spent time on a flower-scented Mediterranean isle, which I'll leave unnamed in case he wants to find seclusion there again. **"It was wild!"** Dylan said, wrapping up the gypsy fires and the island's unspoiled beauty in a word. But he always brings the "raging beauty" back home. **"I feel at home in America,"** he continued, **"because, as primitive as it is, I still can create from America. All my feelings come out of America. When you leave America, you get peace. America is a very violent place, so when you leave, you get that peace – to create. My language is still American, though. I don't know the language, the rules or the structure of other countries. I was never a kid in any other country... In America everybody's got a gun... I've got a few of them."** Remembering his old-style cutting slashes at interviews and his knife-throwing in *Billy The Kid*, my assistant, Gabrielle Goodchild, said: "You're pretty good with knives, Bob." Like a badman, Dylan shot back: **"I'm better with a gun!"** (Dylan's West Coast rehearsal studio used to be a rifle factory).

It's no secret, of course, that Dylan missed the box-office and critical bullseye with his ambitious film, *Renaldo And Clara*. There are still unconfirmed reports that it may soon circulate Europe in either its original four-hour form, or an abridged two-hour version. Dylan may yet recoup his losses. His divorce a year ago was financially, and emotionally, draining. Yet some of the press has focused on money as the only reason behind this world tour.

Dylan still believes firmly that "the myth of the starving artist" is about that – "a myth." He told me, with obvious annoyance at the stress that has been put on his box-office appeal: **"I earn everything I make! I'm not getting nothing for nothing. Reggie Jackson of the New York Yankees gets three million dollars a year for striking out! For every dollar I make, there's a pool of sweat on the floor. I feel we're all underpaid — my band, my singers."** After one performance, he said: **"I put in an eight-hour day in two hours on stage."**

Part of the excitement that Dylan's been causing in his world tour has been his new backing group. Dylan made it clear to me that he was in no way running down his years with The Band or the various musicians on the Rolling Thunder Revue. But he is delighted at the range of styles and effects possible with this dynamic eight-piece and three backing-singer group, **"I got myself a real band!"** Dylan exploded with boyish delight. When did he put them all together? **"I started recruiting this band last January. It was difficult It was hard. A lot of blood has gone into this band. This band understands my songs. It doesn't matter if they understand me or not. They understand my songs!"**

Was there some magic mystery arranger at work behind the scenes, I wondered. With pride, Dylan said: **"There's nothing that band does that can't be worked out on my guitar!"** As much energy as Dylan pours into his performances, as perfectionist as he is, he seems to get a remarkable input of energy from appreciative audiences.

Looking back over the years since he arrived in New York at the age of 19 with a headful of dreams and the drive to conquer and survive, Dylan thought about those who had made it through the pop jungle. **"Who is around?"** Dylan asked. **"The Rolling Stones? Who else has come through? Mick Jagger and Keith Richard have come through the same fire that I've come through. Who else? Gerry Goffin? Leiber and Stoller?"** He seemed to be searching his mind for those veterans of rock who hadn't died, quit or been burned-out. **"When it comes down to it,"** he went on, **"it's a question of how much of it you can stand. How much can you stick it out?"** One reason Dylan's ability to "stick it out" is all the more amazing is that he's several people at once, a polymath as well as a Protean chameleon. In the past, he's shrugged off labels wanting to keep himself free of "confinement and definition," wanting to change roles or to pursue several at once. He used to wince at the name "poet," exploding at me once **"That's such a huge, goddamn word for someone to call themselves – A Poet!... When people started calling me a poet... it didn't make me any happier..."** I asked him now if he had become any more comfortable at being called "a poet" these days. **"Very much so,"** Dylan replied. **"I consider myself a poet first and a musician second. I live like a poet and I'll die like a poet I've always liked my stuff. All you really have to please is yourself, in any arena of life... it doesn't really matter."**

Yet, as rock superstar, he had a mass audience to contend with, a problem faced in the flesh by few living or dead poets. Could he see his audiences from up there on the stage? **"I sure can,"** Dylan replied quickly. Could he feel when he was breaking through to them? Dylan: **"It doesn't matter, really. You can't depend on an audience to tell you that you're good. You have to know it If you know it, they'll know it."** Dylan seemed determined this time to lead a much saner life on the road than that on many of his previous tours. Having travelled with him during wild, sleepless tours when the pace was more than anyone could stand, I was pleased to see him conserving his energies. **"I'm not in the pressure-cooker,"** said the man who'd just cooked up half-a-dozen steaming concerts.

"Do you get a chance to relax when you're on the road?" With a slight tone of annoyance, Dylan said: **"I am relaxed!"** He lit another cigarette and took another shot of Courvoisier. Dylan has never set himself a more furious pace. By 11.30 p.m. July 15 he'd already sung this year to more than 800,000 people in 50 concerts in nine countries. It was hard to believe him when he told me that he'd be doing 115 shows in 1978. Later, an associate confirmed that 65 concerts in America would begin on September 13 in Maine. Even the band members don't have the full itinerary yet.

In London, Dylan managed to relax nearly every day by swimming. He churned up several laps at a North London public pool, where few of the other swimmers recognized him. He spent his first night in London (June 12) at the German-made film, *The American Friend*. His American

friends – Dennis Hopper and David Blue, were in the picture, a study in the attractions and repulsions of violence. At one point Hopper mouths a phrase from Dylan's *I Pity The Poor Immigrant*.

The next two nights Dylan made the rounds of London music clubs with Brooklyn-born Elly Smith, CBS Records press manager. Elly had to cope with more than 50 requests from all the media for interviews with Bob. She also sorted out hundreds of pleas for backstage passes from people who wanted to meet their "old buddy" or distant idol. Among those who did see Dylan backstage were the actors Jack Nicholson and Shelley Duvall, who are filming *The Shining* here for Stanley Kubrick. George Harrison and Ringo Starr were on hand, and Bianca Jagger and her daughter, Jade, were around. Also backstage at Earls Court were photographer David Bailey and TV comedian Eric Idle.

One night I witnessed a touching reunion with an old folk-singer friend from Woodstock, Happy Traum, and his family. Happy was appearing nearby at the Troubadour, the first place Dylan had ever sung in London, in 1963. At one late-night Chelsea party, Dylan greeted American pop-artist Andy Warhol, Bryan Ferry and a few other scene-makers. The only London journalists Dylan talked to, as far as I know, were *Melody Maker's* Ray Coleman and Max Jones and Michael Gray, author of *Song And Dance Man: The Art Of Bob Dylan*. Dylan spoke to Philippe Adler of *L'Express*, Paris, and also met *Rolling Stone's* Jonathan Cott on the coach from Rotterdam to Amsterdam.

Sitting in the Royal Box at one concert was Mrs Shirley Williams the Education Secretary, a longtime fan. She was interested when I told her that Dylan was a college drop-out who'd gotten an honorary doctorate of music from Princeton University.

Speaking of education, as soon as Dylan arrived in London, he took a crash course in the current British music scene, with a few seminars in new wave and reggae. He listened to recordings by the Sex Pistols, Wire, John Cooper Clarke, Elvis Costello and others. Dylan and Elly went to hear Merger, the reggae band, at the 100 Club. Impressed with their work. Dylan asked that they be added to the Blackbushe bill. At Dingwalls, Dylan also heard a set by the gutsy blues band George Thorogood and the Destroyers.

On Wednesday June 14, after enduring a small CBS executive party in his honour at the Next Door Club in Covent Garden, Bob and Elly started cruising the music haunts again From Clouds in Brixton (closed), to the Four Aces in Dalston (open, but not swinging) they proceeded to the Music Machine in Camden Town. There, Dylan heard Robert Gordon and Link Wray.

Although some press-people and fans besieged Dylan's hotel in Kensington, it wasn't the crowd mania of the Sixties. One day, he signed autographs outside the hotel. Another day, a carload of photographers gave Dylan's Mercedes a chase through red lights, until his chauffeur-cum-bodyguard, Joe, finally eluded the pursuers.

After Dylan performed for 50,000 people at the open-air Rotterdam Folk Festival on June 23, he explored Amsterdam, and went to the home of Rembrandt. He also visited the house where the Jewish girl, Anne Frank had written her diary, hiding from the Nazis before she was taken to her death at Belsen, and while there questioned Elly searchingly about National Front activities in England. He had planned to visit a concentration camp site in Germany, but that was cancelled through lack of time.

Though life on the road this time was kept to a fairly quiet pace, Dylan did jam through one night with Eric Clapton in Germany, and there was frequent hotel jamming with his band members. But, David Mansfield told me at Blackbushe, this leg of the world tour was much

more relaxing, with time for sight-seeing and shopping. In the restaurant where I was talking with Dylan, nearly every eye was on him. I wondered if he could ever find those secret little cafes, like he used to in Greenwich Village, where he could scribble down lyrics and ideas for songs. Dylan told me: **"Yes, there are thousands of places in this world where I can write... cafes where I can..."** I offered him his old line: "be invisible". **"Yes,"** he went on, **"I'm invisible now. I don't have that kind of fame. People know what my job is. They leave me alone. In reality, I'm not that famous. I might be anyone... Fame is awe. People take me as I am. On stage, I'm just taking them out of what they were."**

I couldn't draw Dylan out much on *Renaldo And Clara*. **"I talked too much about that film already,"** he said. Clearly, he was hurt by the way the American press had ravaged the film, yet encouraged by the warm reaction it had received at the Cannes Film Festival. **"It's not obvious,"** Dylan said about the film, adding: **"You gotta see it, Bob."**

Although bristling with drive Dylan left me with the general impression that he is far from happy these days. Naturally, the great reviews and ovations he's gotten pleased him. But it's difficult to recall protracted periods when Dylan has been happy. Perhaps it's all what is called "the divine discontent of the artist". We can all carry on a dialogue with Dylan, at his performances, or through his recordings: his work always commands a response from us. How incredible that as he changes, his music of the past unfolds new connotations. When he sings *Like A Rolling Stone* these days, the powerful lyrics take on a new relevance for and about Dylan, as well as for his listeners.

In Australia, Dylan said: **"I'm on a steady rolling path. It's the only path I know, so it's the most familiar path to me. I'm neither happy, nor disillusioned with it."** Like a rolling path.

A close listening to many of the lyrics of *Street-Legal* reveals a set of narrators who are oppressed lonely, wandering and alienated – in a foreign country. *Where Are You Tonight?* may very well be his most direct confessional of pain and loss. Yet at Blackbushe, he'd changed the new song, brightened its tempo, muted the oppressive tone.

The pained lyrics hid behind the music of dark glasses, yet they were still there. That time, the song seemed less to express anguish than to convey that anguish had been exercised. Recently, Dylan's been showing rare candour in stepping out from behind another persona by introducing *Shelter From The Storm* as **"the story of my life"**. The song tells of the flight of a man, who is living in a foreign country, from toil, blood and doom. In his moment of greatest need, the narrator finds that safe, warm shelter with a woman. Then, he loses her. I find the desperation of that search still strong in *Street-Legal*.

I pressed Dylan to tell me more about one of his most intriguing formulations: **"No man can fight another like the man who fights himself. Who could be a stronger enemy? "It's true that a man is his own worst enemy, just as he is his own best friend. If you deal with the enemy within, then no enemy without can stand a chance,"** Dylan says.

I probed dangerous territory. What is "the enemy without"? Dylan replied tersely: **"Suspicion"**. Could he put his finger on "the enemy within"? He laughed at my question. **"I'll draw you a picture for the cover of your book,"** he said, **"with a big finger pointing to the enemy within!"** He poked his index-finger toward his heart. "Come on, man," I pleaded. Cautiously, Bob said: **"It's all in those two verses of that last song,"** directing me to *Where Are You Tonight?*

The lines begin: "I fought with my twin, that enemy within / 'til both of us fell by the way..." (Copyright, 1978, Big Ben Music, Ltd.) The clue haunts me. Is "the enemy within" Dylan's Gemini twins locked in mortal combat? Is it the id battling the ego? Is it the death-trip

threatening the life-force? In an earlier song, there was an encounter with a different kind of "twin". In *Simple Twist of Fate* Dylan sang: "People tell me it's a sin / To know and feel too much within". (Copyright, 1974, Big Ben Music, Ltd.)

That's how we can all have our dialogue with Dylan, and he with us. During most interviews, he has used wit and cunning to conceal his personal emotions. Then he'll turn around and tell the whole world about his feelings in his lyrics, if you can penetrate the ambiguities and the codes and the shifting personas.

Dylan fights like a demon to protect his privacy, then stands naked in his songs. That's where the best dialogues with Dylan may always be, for he asks us better questions than anyone can ever ask him. The question itself is often the answer.

Dylan and the press have long carried on a duel of wits. He puts it this way: **"If I don't talk to the press, I'm a hermit... If I do talk to the press, then I'm trying to manipulate reporters... In my position, I can't win."** I don't agree. Without a single formal interview in the English press, Dylan won completely at Earls Court and at Blackbushe.

Dylan has long held a democratic view about the creativity that resides in everyone. He once told me: **"To be a poet does not necessarily mean that you have to write words on paper... One of those truck-drivers... is a poet. He talks like a poet..."**

Dylan maintains that **"the purpose of art is to inspire"** others with the belief that they, too, can be creative. I reminded him about something he'd told his old Minneapolis gang back in 1962 after he'd gained some initial recognition in New York. Then he'd said: **"There are a million me's, all over the country..."** Did he still really believe that today. **"Yes,"** he answered, **"only now there are a million more million me's."**

The cheers and the excitement have subsided. Dylan's back on the road again, maybe toward "ecstasy" maybe toward the highway blues. With the American audience, he is facing perhaps his greatest challenges. For all the rapport he has with millions around the world, I still sense a foreboding loneliness about him. That may be the curse of knowing and feeling too much within. That may be the enemy within and without.

"A lonely man with money is still lonely..." he wrote in 1964. Two years later, he said: **"It's always lonely where I am."** We can only hope that his rapport with his new band will help.

To show my appreciation for his survival as a great artist who is always busy being reborn, I wanted to give him some token. He's shown fascination with Tarot cards in recent years, and *Desire* and *Street-Legal* are rampant with Tarot imagery. I handed him a Judgement card from my deck. It shows a winged angel blowing a trumpet, raising the dead from their graves, and they are reborn again as little children. The Judgement card is like "Forever Young", telling us that music can revitalize and renew us. Dylan thanked me warmly for the token gift. **"But you shouldn't break up your pack of cards,"** he said. I told him I'd already sent off The Magician card – which amazingly resembles Dylan, visually, and in its symbolic meanings – to my publisher in New York. Dylan accepted the card. What else can you give a man who has given us all so much?

11 July 1978
Mette Fugl Interview, Gothenburg, Sweden

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, p. 865.

On his arrival at Gothenburg's Landvetter Airport, Dylan is interviewed twice in rapid succession. The first interview (this) by Danish TV reporter Mette Fugl lasts only five minutes and is followed by an even briefer interview with the Swedish TV reporter Nils Chioler (see next entry). That night sees the first of his two shows at the Gothenburg Scandinavium Stadium.

This interview was partially broadcast by Danish television on July 12 and 16 (*TV-Aktuellt*)

MF: Okay, once you wrote songs about your dreams. You wrote "Bob Dylan's Dream," "115th Dream" what are you doing these days?

BD: Same thing.

MF: What would be your 1978 version of a visionary song?

BD: All of them.

MF: Anyone. Okay. Whatever you do almost it has been categorised as pure genius. Is there space in your great success for self criticism for artistic development?

BD: Mmmm, surely.

MF: When everybody says it's genius, it's pure genius?

BD: I don't think everybody says that.

MF: You have said in interviews that your songs have no political content and no social significance. But still you attract one of the largest crowds in the history of pop music. Doesn't that indicate that your songs have a certain social significance?

BD: What do you mean?

MF: Is it only your admirers, your audience, that find an interest in the content of your songs or are you just caught up of the contents?

BD: Possibly.

MF: Is it that you just don't want to discuss it?

BD: Well, no. You never know what's happening in the minds of men.

MF: No and you don't want. But you have written songs about Hurricane Carter and Joey Gallo and you've dedicated your last album to Emmett Grogan. They have one thing in common those three men. They are sort of outlaws. Do you have an outlaw syndrome?

BD: No, not really.

MF: Not really. How come you dedicate your songs to the sad eyed drifters, the rough riders?

BD: Well, who... they just happen to be in the forefront of my imagination.

11 July 1978
Nils Chioler Interview, Gothenburg, Sweden

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, p. 867.

On his arrival at Gothenburg's Landvetter Airport, Dylan is interviewed twice in rapid succession. The first interview by Danish TV reporter Mette Fugl lasts only five minutes (see previous entry) and is followed by an even briefer interview with the Swedish TV reporter Nils Chioler (this). That night sees the first of his two shows at the Gothenburg Scandinavium Stadium.

This interview was broadcast by Swedish Television later that same day

NC: Bob Dylan, the symbol of the sixties.
BD: To who?
NC: To the youth of the sixties.
BD: Who said that? I never said that.
NC: Wasn't it you? Do you think there is a difference between you of the sixties and the Bob Dylan of today?
BD: I couldn't tell you. Is there a difference between you in the sixties and today?
NC: Oh, I think so, yes. Don't you think your music has developed, from the sixties.
BD: Possibly.
NC: When you are around touring, as you are now, do you think it's another audience than the one you met in the sixties.
BD: No. It's the same, basically same.
NC: Are you failing to reach the new, youth generation.
BD: I don't know.
NC: You don't think there's a difference between you and the songs you write?
BD: I don't think so

15 September 1978
Matt Damsker Interview, Senator Hotel, Augusta, Maine

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 459-467.

Matt Damsker was the entertainment writer for the *Philadelphia Evening & Sunday* Bulletin. His interview with Dylan took place right before the start of Bob's tour opening in Augusta, in the Senator Hotel. This was the day of the concert at the Augusta Civic Centre, the start of a massive American tour and the first concert since Blackbushe. The interview was broadcast the following October on American radio and partially published in the USA in *Circus Weekly* on December 19th of that year.
The broadcast proper is preceded by a discussion between Damsker (MD) and a radio announcer (RA).
Taken from the circulating tape and not from the printed article.

RA: Matt Damsker is a writer, contemporary music critic, entertainment writer for the Philadelphia Evening and Sunday Bulletin. Matt Damsker is the gentleman who interviewed Bob Dylan up in Maine just a few weeks ago. Matt, I think a few people out there would like to know some details of the interview. When exactly was it, where was it, were you alone with Dylan, how'd you feel about the whole thing? In what frame of mind did you find Dylan?

MD: Yeah. Well, it took place September 15th, the afternoon of the first show of the tour. He would open his tour that evening in Augusta, Maine Civic Center on the Campus at the University and I interviewed him at a hotel, in a motel room actually; I guess it was his motel suite, about a mile and a half from the concert hall, the Senator Motel and It was one o'clock in the afternoon. It was Dylan and myself, in his suite. He had some instruments there, a rented piano I believe, that he was pounding out what sounded like an upbeat blues song. I heard him as I was approaching the open door.

RA: Were you alone?

MD: Yeah. I was accompanied at first by his press agent, Paul Wasserman who arranged the whole thing.

RA: Who introduced you to him... You've been a Dylan fan, or certainly a listener of his music...

MD: I was greatly influenced, I have to say, by Dylan's music in the 1960's...

RA: Was it a bit overwhelming meeting him for the first time, and having to sit and, you know, have a conversation and ask questions?

MD: Yeah, it was. Actually, it was an interview I always thought would be the prize interview for someone who was covering the rock music of the sixties and seventies, and I never really expected, I thought, to get it; I felt that interviews with Dylan would remain, you know, a pretty rare commodity, and I guess when it happened it was unreal because... ah!

RA: I imagine because it's such a rare opportunity, every question has sort of double value. Did you pre-plan any questions?

MD: I did. I pre-planned a lot of questions, but I missed the one question I would have wanted to ask him I think, because when he started to open up he seemed to be pretty honest about himself in a way. That was the question about Rubin Hurricane Carter, and his support of him, in light of the fact that the case has sort of had a turn about.

RA: That's the question that you forgot to ask him?

MD: The question I didn't ask.

RA: Well, you got a lot of good questions, and we're ready for the interview. This is, again, September 15th in Augusta, Maine, right before the start of Dylan's tour opening show. Matt Damsker of the *Bulletin*.

MD: This is a long tour, and it follows a long period of touring. Is it the longest period you've gone through?

BD: No, in the old days we used to do it more. When I was living at the Chelsea Hotel, we were touring eight or nine months out of the year. Nine months, that's an awful long time. Then, of course, we moved to Woodstock. Those days were... It was harder to tour back then.

MD: Well, what's the motivation for all this touring these days?

BD: Well, I just can't think of nothing else I wanna do right now, really.

MD: There's gossipy reports that you need to make some money.

BD: Well, that's true to a certain extent, but money's not everything.

MD: No. Was it the divorce and things like this... heavy gossip items... I guess I'm exploiting you by asking you that question?

BD: No. That's quite alright. I've lost a lot of money, but I don't think of it that way.

MD: People analyze your stuff very seriously, and I know in reading some of the quotes you've given that you feel sometimes it's taken too seriously. For instance the way the critics reacted to *Renaldo and Clara*.

BD: That I thought was shameful, yeah. First of all people should find out and decide for themselves whether they like it or not But these critics, they do bring a certain amount of responsibility that they have, not only to the artist, but to the public. And unless they've had the experiences that the artist has had, or can relate to those experiences, then they shouldn't be involved with that artists work. That's what I feel, unless they, you know, they're educated in that type of music, or have lived where that artist has lived, felt what that artist has felt, then they have really no right to criticize in a negative way anything which they themselves don't quite understand. There's enough people out there who don't understand it anyway. Of course, I'm just talking about negative criticism... there are plenty of positive critics around too. And I imagine lots of critics take sides, same way as in theatre I think, critics just take sides. I mean, people are criticizers of life, you know. If you go over somebody, if you're sitting around in somebody's house, you're all just talking, sometimes, you know, everybody is a critic; on some level on some thing. Critic, seems just by the sound of the word, it seems to be a negative thing.

MD: To put down, yeah..

BD: To be critical, yeah. So what is the opposite of a critic? A supporter. So, I have plenty of supporters too, so critics don't bother me.

MD: A supporter doesn't seem like a legitimate... I mean, if somebody can be completely objective, you would think that would be the best stance, but it doesn't seem critics can be completely objective.

BD: Well, they get paid not to be objective.

MD: Under the pretence of objectivity, shall we say?

BD: Right Everybody's gotta make a living, you know.

MD: I'm a critic too Bob, I've had to criticise your stuff, I mean...

BD: Well that's fine. A lot of the things I've done need to be criticised. I'll agree to that.

MD: Do you find that you have gotten insights from criticism?

BD: No. I don't think so, but I respect it when it's right you know. If he can't identify with something, and it's not done in his way of thinking, well, he can criticise it, you know. I've done a lot of things which I criticise myself.

MD: I understand you're cutting down *Renaldo and Clara* to two hours.

BD: That's already a fact.

MD: I can ask, was it in response to the commercial...?

BD: No, it was in response to the theatre owners themselves. It wasn't in response to the people, because the people, as I understand, did get something out of it and will continue to. But it was a direct action that was done for the theatre, for the theatre owners. I mean, they just say they couldn't show the movie, they couldn't give it a fair showing at four hours, 'cause they couldn't get people in and out. It costs them to open their doors... too much money. So it's more practical now.

MD: You know, Bob, in viewing the film, there was one scene that really struck me. The scene where you jump out of the tour bus, in New York City and you sort of wander down. You seem to get away pretty anonymously, you hand a beggar a bill, and you sort of hold your hand out as if you were a beggar, and I got the impression that that scene, it sort of represented that you were sort of looking for something that was lost to you, and I began to think that maybe the whole film has something to do with that; it was a question of identity had been lost through public image, and that perhaps the real person inside had become lost to his public person that everyone has created.

BD: I am not what you call a commercial star, you know, so, you have to remember me in that light all the time. I don't sell records you know, like Fleetwood Mac sells, and I don't sell platinum records, you know. I just don't. I sell enough, y'know, but I'm not a commercial star in that sense of the word. Yes, I would sell more records than would Kiss, you can name a lot of groups that would. And also I'm not the type of star that is, assuming there's no place I can't go or can't be, nothing I can't do, just because people might know who I am. I don't live under that barrier.

MD: You don't feel you're living the drama that people have created of your life?

BD: Well, I feel that I must have created a drama; I don't think other people have.

MD: Do you still see yourself, did you ever see yourself as a strong moral voice?

BD: Yes, I have. I've tried to be very moral in all my dealings. In an ultimate sense, I've tried to remain very moral, and even in my sinful ways I see some morality coming out of the ashes. I always reason it out in my head in some kind of way. You just can't be perfect.

MD: Do you feel it carries over into the seventies? I mean, there was such... an anger, and seems like such a righteous resentment, in that consciousness in the sixties, all that was going on, all that you articulated, very ambiguously, I suppose. Do you feel that it's similar in the seventies, or do you feel that everything has changed and it's more of an entertainment concept? Because back then it did seem to be strongly tied to a message that people hadn't been.. at least that pop music and the rock n' roll hadn't been speaking to, in the fifties, till the folk people came around in the early sixties.

BD: No, it was the Beatles that did that The Beatles did that I mean, we always knew, you know, Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, John Lee Hooker, Buddy Holly, you know, we were always in that tradition all the time. I personally went into the folk music thing because it was new to me, and I realised that I didn't have that information; and it still stuck, I mean, it still sticks with me. So I was using the ballad form, alongside another storytelling form which... that's how I was able to write those songs, because I learned it in the folk circle, that form. You can also tell the same story in a blues form, which... one step beyond that blues would be rock n' roll form, but once you get into production, you aren't going to tell too much of the story at all, you know. Records nowadays are all production.

MD: You've avoided that in your records?

BD: I haven't I'm not sure if it's good or bad, you know. It's just as bad as good, it's good because it allows me... I've been making records long enough so I'm confident to go into the studio and just do it, without a producer. 'Cause I started recording for John Hammond in 1960, and that's the way he made records, we'd go in and make a record, live.

MD: It's a living thing, recording the songs, like you said in that *Playboy* interview.

BD: Right, that's the way I learned how to record, and that's the way other people were doing it Now, you don't do it that way, because the machinery is... they got... you know, it's like, er... you go in a recording studio now and what I do is obsolete. So, I don't, half the time, use a decent studio. I mean, we made the last record, we made *Street Legal* in a rehearsal hall, you know, only because we couldn't use the studio we booked in town, you know. So, yeah, I could use a good producer, you know, I could make some well-produced records, 'cause my songs are good enough, I mean, you don't need but a fairly decent song, you know, to have a well-produced record.

MD: Well, it seems that there were... well, I think of one album *New Morning*, as the closest thing to, like, a Dylan pop produced album, that seemed to me... it seemed to have a sort of pastel, if that's the word, texture to it. In many ways it's probably an album that people don't take seriously.

BD: I don't think they do, but if you listen to that album, you realise we had the girls on there too. Lot of people complain about the girls, you know, but I hear this sound that these particular girls make, background singers, you'll see the show tonight, you'll see they're not the Ikettes, they're not Barry Manilow's girls, they sing in the way these songs should be sung.

MD: I guess you feel it just wouldn't be Bob Dylan, it wouldn't be the Bob Dylan style if you went in and did a produced album, you know, with all the overdubs?

BD: Oh no, no. Just, that I never had the time to do it, or patience you know, 'cause we've been on the road now for so long. I had two weeks to make an album this year. That's all I had was two weeks, and fortunately we managed to do it If I hadn't done it in two weeks, I wouldn't have a record out and you know how it is, after a certain amount of time, you won't do those songs anymore, so you lose them.

MD: I would think with someone like you, that if you started to labor over those songs with overdubs that it would probably kill the purity that you might feel.

BD: Well, I feel that you can do it both. I haven't done it that way, but I feel that you can go in... see my records first of all, they take a week or two to make. Other people... the Eagles go and make a record, they'll take a year. You know, every time they're off the road, they'll go work on it and that's what they'll be doing. They'll be making that record and it'll be important to them. Me, I don't do that, cause I don't have a producer. Er, how can I tell you?

MD: I mean you could get any producer you want. I get the impression what you're saying is, you don't feel there's a producer you know that could be that sympathetic?

BD: I'm searching for one right now as a matter of fact. As a matter of fact, I'm searching for a qualified record producer. I mean, you listen to one of those songs by the Bee-Gees, you know. This is one of those songs, if you hear the song underneath the song, that's the real song. But what you listen to in a room, on a record player, or a disco, is that live beat and that's swell, you know, that what is it kind of thing, you know. It just sounds good, 'cause it's very angelic and it's got the beat to it too.

MD: Now that's an interesting point right there. The concept of disco that has begun to dominate – like one whole half of what people are thinking of pop and rock music in the seventies. To me, I reflect it as a kind of mechanical machine music that's there to sustain a mood and a rhythm. But it seems in opposition to the whole mainstream of sixties music, the stuff you were into and the Beatles stuff.

BD: It is, but it's purpose, it's main purpose is to make people dance and forget their troubles. Now you and me, maybe we go down to a bar and listen to a bar band. If you feel like dancing you can dance, if you feel like drinking you can drink. But these people, they get dressed up, and they wanna go out and boogie, in a sophisticated kind of a way, and that music allows them to do it. It's too late to go back, 'cause it's all done with machinery. It's perfectly legitimate, people want to dance, and it creates an environment for them to do it in.

MD: Yeah, but it seems so amoral. There's decadence and amorality to the disco...

BD: They always say that the Devil is always, you know, involved in dancing. You know, one side says that, but I personally don't believe it at all. Some of the great religions of the world don't believe it either.

MD: That idea of amorality equated with evil crops up in a book you might have read. I don't know if you have, *The World According To Garp*. It's just out now by John Irving.

BD: I heard of it.

MD: It equates evil, the evil in the world, not as such a mysterious force, it equates it with an absence of morality. You know, keeping faith between people in a marriage, let's say, is the hardest thing to do. In other words, the evil is a force that is sinful because it exists; good is more a human creation. I was trying to equate that perhaps to your music, in which notions of evil and good sort of trade back, and the images of good and evil, bad and good, constructive and destructive, sort of trade back and forth with often equal power and the only thing that overcomes one or supports the other is the personal faith of the singer or the people involved.

BD: Well, that's always true. I mean, even the old ballad singers that used to sing, they used to lay it out, you know, in the same way, and in the singer was the voice, which could decide for you the listener, you know, which side was right and which was wrong. There just can't be such a thing. I personally don't think good and evil has got anything to do with marriage at all. Marriage, when you get into it, sometimes you find it's just a job; being faithful to oneself is more worthy than being faithful to an idea, or something which is transient, you know what I mean, which changes all the time. It's illusory. You're always grasping it, you know you're wondering what you grasp, but even when you get hold of it you don't have anything.

MD: The anger that I feel in so much of your stuff in the sixties, resurfacing. I don't feel it so much on the, say an album like *Street Legal*, except maybe on a couple of the songs, *The Changing Of The Guard* and *No Time To Think*...

BD: Well, we'll put aside the anger for the time being, 'cause the anger doesn't drive. The sixties was a driven time, anger was driving everybody. So that's what was pushing me, anger. But, nowadays you can't be pushed by that no more, you have to just deal with anger. It's out in front of you except... instead of behind you. That's the way I see it anyway.

MD: Are you bored by rock and roll? Do you feel that it just would cloud you by making you competitive?

BD: No, I don't know what you mean by rock n' roll. I've...

MD: You mentioned it yourself, the Fleetwood Mac stuff.

BD: Well, I don't know if I'd call that rock n' roll; I think maybe that'd be pop. Rock n' roll is just that twelve-bar beat, you know, and it's the backbeat. That's all that rock n' roll is. That's all you need to play rock n' roll and that kind of rock n' roll is whatever the subject matter is about that's got the backbeat. You can move to it, it makes you feel alive, but for me, I mean I've never... I used to play rock n' roll, if that's what it was called, when I was growing up, but I saw these people that have died, you know. I've seen Buddy Holly play, I've seen Eddie Cochran play, I've seen Sam Cooke, I've seen all these people that are dead. Not a day goes by when I don't think about all these people.

MD: The death of Elvis?

BD: There's another case.

MD: How did you react?

BD: I was stunned. Something I never had thought about I mean, I thought anybody else was gonna live forever. I saw no reason for his death.

MD: When you survived that motorcycle accident in '66, I guess that was a real brush that sort of...?

BD: That was a brush. I survived that, but what I survived after that was even harder to survive than the motor cycle crash. That was just a physical crash, but sometimes there

are things in life that you cannot see, are harder to survive than something which you can pin down.

MD: Could you pin that down a little more for me. I mean, can you say what you survived after that?

BD: Well, that crash was, I think, in 1967 or '66 and at that time I deserved to crash, 'cause I certainly couldn't have gone on... it was just, you know... the Great Spirit telling me, you know, you need a rest. But that had nothing to do with me, that crash. After that, what I survived after that was man-made.

MD: Of your own making. I guess it humbled you when you crashed?

BD: Well, I don't recall what I was thinking about. I looked at the ceiling for a while...

MD: I mean, *John Wesley Harding*, maybe I'm wrong in saying, resulted from that.

BD: Well, at that time, I had not recorded for a while, I don't think... I might have had a new contract coming up, which I think I did. I didn't know how to record the way other people were recording, and I didn't want to. The Beatles had just released *Sergeant Pepper*, which I didn't like at all, because I didn't like... I could see that... Talk about indulgence. I thought that was a very indulgent album, though the songs on it were real good. I just didn't think all that production was necessary, 'cause the Beatles had never done that before. The Stones did it too, with something they were doing. Mick had that song out, *10,000 Year Old Man* or something like that.

MD: That sort of came after Sergeant Pepper, sort of copying it.

BD: Yeah, OK. And at that time, Janis Joplin was starting to make it big, Jimi Hendrix was starting to make it big, the Grateful Dead were making it big. There was a lotta stuff happening that... er... I just didn't quite understand at that period of time, none of us did. We didn't figure it had anything to do with anything. Although Janis was great, Janis was great, but the psychedelic music scene, that's what I'm trying to say. Jimi Hendrix, what he was doing with his guitar was fine, but then all the producers started to get into everything. Anyway, we were caught – we were caught We were up there in Woodstock, so we were laying down songs, and at that period of time, we were laying down all these songs on tape. We were just writing 'em and singing 'em onto a tape, and I was going to have to go in and make a record, and I figured it was just the kind of stuff I wanted to do on my record. I'd sing the songs and I'd say "it didn't feel right". I mean, I didn't want to... I don't figure it was saying anything different, you know what I mean, except in my particular type of way it was. But then I went back and just wrote just real simple songs. It was the first time I ever did an album, ever wrote a song, as a matter of fact, there's only two songs on the album which came at the same time as the music The rest of the songs was written out on paper, and I found the tunes for them later. I didn't do it before, and I haven't done it since. That might account for the specialness of that album. It came out at a time when... it was live in the studio. I knew it wasn't gonna stay there very long, though, but it was special, and I still sing them songs.

MD: They're powerful songs, and it took so long, I mean, because... as I say, I was picking up that album expecting you to have like rolled along, but you sorta went back to the pastoral, rustic... it wasn't folk, it was more, you know, a swing into country which would solidify with *Nashville Skyline*, and er...

BD: Right I hear you. But the thing, you see, I've never broke tradition. I've never broke tradition – I've never gone and done something that had no tradition behind it When I finally broke with it at *John Wesley Harding*, I started out again, and I knew it wasn't where I was gonna stay very long, but I had to explore that territory, and never until I got to *Blood On The Tracks* did I finally get a hold of what I needed to get a hold of and once I got hold of that, *Blood On The Tracks* wasn't it either, and neither was *Desire*. But *Street Legal* comes the closest to where my music is going, you know, for the rest of the time. It has to do with an illusion of time, I mean, what the songs are necessarily about is the illusions of time. Now, in the old days, they used to do it automatically, but

it's like I had amnesia, all of a sudden in 1966. I couldn't remember how to do it. I tried to force-learn it, and I couldn't learn what I had been able to do naturally like *Highway 61 Revisited*. I mean, you can't sit down and write that consciously, I mean, because it has to do with the break-up of time,

MD: Fragmentation, fragmentation's such an important part I guess in your art. I feel that.

BD: You know, it's got, I mean, it's just... in four lines, in the first four lines, it covers all you need to cover. It covers the past, present and future. I had to unlearn how to do that consciously because I learned in '75 that I was going to have to do it from now on... consciously; and those are the kinds of songs I wanted to write. The ones that do have the break-up of time, where there is no time, trying to make the focus as strong as a magnifying glass under the sun, you know. To do it consciously is a trick, you know and I did it on that... er... I did it on *Blood On The Tracks* for the first time, and I didn't know... I knew how to do it because it was a technique I learned, I actually had a teacher for it, and er...

MD: Who was that?

BD: It was an old man in New York who is... who knew about that, and so I picked up what I could.

MD: Do you feel that *Blood On The Tracks* and *Desire* were sort of sentimental albums?

BD: Well, *Blood On The Tracks* did consciously what I used to do unconsciously. I didn't perform it well, I didn't have the power to perform it well, but I did write the songs; they can be changed but the idea was right They... it might be sentimental in a way, because maybe I was sentimental... if it was in a way sentimental, I mean, I was fighting sentimentality all the way down the line. *Desire* was a little different, but of course I had a co-writer in on that and we both brought our own ideas to it

MD: It seemed like *Blood On The Tracks* was a confession, it was real personal, it was a real chronicle. I could see that in your fragmented way, like on *Tangled Up In Blue*, you were sort of telling a story, and I tied it on to your relationship with Sara.

BD: Well, here's the thing. There might be some little part of me which is confessing something which I've experienced and I know, but it is not definitely the total me confessing anything. I mean, when Mick Jagger sings *Beast Of Burden*, you know what I mean, there's something in there that's in him confessing, but you just do that

MD: Another song on the Rolling Stones album which seems like it's for you, that *Some Girls* song where he sings it in your voice just about, he sings... "gimme a lethal dose"...

BD: Well, Mick is always kinda singing... I hear myself in Mick a lot, you know. The one you mean, has it got Zuma Beach on it?

MD: Yeah.

BD: I don't live on Zuma Beach. I think he's talking about Neil Young, if you wanna know the truth, 'cause he lives on Zuma Beach, I've never lived there.

MD: That house you built, on the coast. I don't know the story with it; was that sort of a Xanadu for you?

BD: No, not really. It's a long story. I don't think you'd even be interested. The house just happened, you know... it was... it happened accidentally. I mean, I wasn't paying too much attention to what was happening, but I had a man who knew how to... who did know, but I wasn't really paying too much attention and, er, you know, it just got a little larger than usual and a little spread out But it isn't...

MD: It's sort of like an elusive chapter, you know, a man builds a massive house with a dome...

BD: No, no, I don't think so... my home is where my heart is, you know, and I just didn't think of domes and wood as home.

MD: Do you feel more at home now? This might be obvious, but, I guess... do you feel more at home doing this, traveling around?

BD: Well, I've been doing it for such a long time, it's all I'm doing now.

MD: I mean, it's your life, yeah. Well, I know you said things like you could be happy with a real settled down life, coming home to a wife and, I guess, you want that again.

BD: Oh definitely. I wouldn't mind it I'd be real happy. I could be perfectly happy and content being a bus driver, y'know. I mean, if all this faded away, it wouldn't bother me. I mean, I could do that, you know. I'd... it would be quite an experience doing it, but I still could go back to, y'know, making pizzas or something, I don't know.

MD: Do you really think... maybe you know, it seems everybody else is dealing with the problem of trying to make their mark, and then maybe for the man who has made his mark it's... easy to say "hey, you know, I don't care if I were in another job or I wasn't making my mark".

BD: Well, you need love. You have to have people who love you, you have to have people you can identify with, who are companions, and there's have to be love in your corner. Y'know, if you don't have that, well then nothing you do is gonna be satisfying to you.

MD: Do you feel that's missing?

BD: In my life? No, I don't feel that's missing. I mean, I don't have... I've got much less than I've ever had, but I've got love, y'know, so that makes me feel that I've got more. But in physical terms, I really don't.

MD: Has your vision of women, of woman, changed significantly since, er... I mean a song like *Just Like A Woman*, it's a definitive song.

BD: Well, that's true, that's true, I believe that. I believe that that feeling in that song is true and that I can grasp it, you know, when I'm singing it. But if you're looking for true companion in a woman, I mean... I can't stand to... to run with women anymore, I just can't, it bothers me. I'd rather stand in front of a rolling train, y'know. But if you find a woman that is more than a companion, that is also your sister, and your lover and your mother, y'know, if you find all them ideas in one woman, well, then you got a companion for life. You don't ever have to think about.

MD: Is there a woman like that though really? It's like that woman, you're saying "is she the mother and the sister" and she's also looking at you saying "is he the father and brother".

BD: Yeah, right. Your father is a son, when he was a baby... that's the way life really is, though. Well, I've got five kids y'know.

MD: I know you do.

BD: And, you know, it's heartbreaking going away and leaving your kids, but you just have to adjust to it.

MD: How many boys and how many girls?

BD: I can't remember.

MD: You've done a real good job at keeping them out of getting swallowed up by the newshounds.

BD: Oh, well, nobody's really interested. I mean, you know, I mean, If they are, that's one thing people don't generally do. There are some things in my life which is off-limits, and I think any man on earth would agree to that. Me, they can do what they want with me. They can write about, they can photograph me, you know, they can say anything they want about, and y'know, do what they want generally. But with things... there is a certain line which nobody deserves to cross, you know. I think that's just a natural line, I mean, anybody would agree to that.

MD: Have your children expressed a desire to go into the music business?

BD: I hope not. I mean, they're all good musicians; they all can play. But I don't want anybody to tell my kids to go into it, into what I'm doing; it's not a good life. I mean, it's not a natural thing, you know, it puts you too much up in the air, it's too much of a commitment to, er, the road y'know. I think we're pulling out now.

MD: OK Bob.

17 September 1978
Jonathan Cott Interview, Portland, New Haven

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 681-692.

This is Jonathan Cott's (JC) second interview with Dylan in less than a year. It took place on September 17th 1978 on bus and plane, on the way to the concert that night in New Haven. The discussions continued in the dressing room before the show. This interview was published in *Rolling Stone* on November 16th 1978.

Soon after the 1978 tour Dylan converted to "born-again" Christianity – "I had no idea" said Cott.

In his book "*Dylan*" (published by Rolling Stone Press, 1985) Cott describes his meeting thus:

> "True to his reputation and to my image of him, Dylan was totally magnetic and mysterious, vulnerable and wary, sincere and caustic, witty and righteous, charming and sly. Indeed, he seemed to combine the characteristics of both the Joker and the Thief- the two characters he sang about in "*All Along The Watchtower*" – both of whose symbolic functions are to shake up one's pre-conception, received opinions, illusions and sense of security."

On the evening of September 15th, the Boston Red Sox were in New York City trying to get back into first place. In New Orleans, just before Muhammad Ali made his comeback, TV commentator Howard Cosell introduced the fighter by quoting from the song *Forever Young*: "May your hands always be busy/May your feet always be swift/May you have a strong foundation/When the winds of changes shift." And in Augusta, Maine, the composer of that song was inaugurating a three month tour of the United States and Canada that will include sixty-five concerts in sixty-two cities.

According to an *Associated Press* review of the opening night, Bob Dylan "drove a packed-house audience of 7200 into shrieks of ecstasy. The thirty-seven-year-old folk-rock singer mixed old songs and new. His audience in the Augusta Civic Center was a mixture of people who first knew Dylan as an angry young poet in the early Sixties and high-school students more accustomed to punk rock. Dylan satisfied both, although his veteran fans seemed the happiest."

After a highly successful series of concerts in Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Western Europe earlier this year, it might seem peculiar to think of Dylan's latest American tour as a kind of comeback. But, at least in this country, Dylan recently has been the recipient of some especially negative reviews, both for his film, *Renaldo and Clara* (which, incidentally, was warmly greeted at this year's Cannes Film Festival), and his latest album, *Street-Legal*. This billingsgate, moreover, has come from a number of Dylan's "veteran fans." In the *Village Voice*, seven reviewers – a kind of firing squad – administered justice to the film with a fusillade of abuse. And *ROLLING STONE*, in its two August issues, featured a column and review that pilloried the album. Yet *Street Legal* seems to me one of Dylan's most passionate, questing and questioning records.

I ran into Dylan in the hallway of his Portland motel at noon on September 17th – an hour before the entourage was to take off for New Haven. He was heading to breakfast and wasn't looking forward to it. **"I ran into a girl last night,"** he told me as we walked to the dining room,

"whom I knew in the Village in 1964. She figured the food wouldn't be too good up here, so she said she'd bring some with her this morning. But I haven't seen her."

"Maybe her love's in vain," I joked.

"Maybe," Dylan laughed.

But just after we had sat down and were told that breakfast wasn't being served any longer, a lovely woman appeared next to us with the promised feast in a basket. We ate, saved the muffins to give to the band later on and went out to catch the Scenicruiser bus that was to drive us to the local airport for the flight – on a chartered BAC 111 jet – to New Haven, where the group was to perform that night at the Veterans' Memorial Coliseum.

Dylan and I sat at the back of the bus. The musicians and tour organizers – the most organized and sweet-tempered people I've met in years – listened to a cassette recording of Ray Charles and the Raylettes. As the bus started, I foolhardily tried to interest Dylan in a theory I had about *Changing Of The Guards* – namely, that the song could be seen to have a coded subtext revealed by the characters of various Tarot cards – the Moon, the Sun, the High Priestess, the Tower and, obviously, the King and Queen of Swords – the two cards Dylan specifically mentions. My idea was that the attributes associated with these images make up the "plot" of the song.

"I'm not really too acquainted with that, you know," he warded me off. (What was that Tarot card doing on the back of the jacket of Desire? I wondered.) Undaunted, I mentioned that it had been said that Tarot diviners discover the future by intuition, "with prophetic images drawn from the vaults of the subconscious." Didn't Dylan think that a song like *Changing Of The Guards* wakens in us the images of our subconscious? Certainly, I continued, such songs as that and *No Time to Think* suggested the idea of spirits manifesting their destiny as the dramatis personae of our dreams.

Dylan wasn't too happy with the drift of the discussion and fell silent. "I guess," I said, "there's no point in asking a magician how he does his tricks."

"Exactly!" Dylan responded cheerfully.

"Okay," I said, "we have to start someplace. What about the first line of *Changing Of The Guards*? Does sixteen years' have anything to do with the number of years you've been on the road?"

"No," Dylan replied, **"sixteen is two short of eighteen years. Eighteen years is a magical number of years to put in time. I've found that threes and sevens... well, things come up in sevens... What am I saying? I mean, what am I saying?"**

I started rambling on about the possible mystical significance of numbers (sixteen equals one plus six, which equals seven, love minus zero, etc.), but by this time I realized that only the bus was going anywhere. It was time to get the interview rolling. And now the interview proper:

<u>The Bus</u>

JC: When I tell *Rolling Stone* what we've been talking about, they won't believe it.

BD: They had the nerve to run the reviews they did on *Street Legal* – why should I give them an interview, anyway?

JC: Are you going to kick me off the bus?

BD: No, it's your interview. It's okay. But if you were doing It for another magazine, it'd be okay, too.

JC: Think I should go somewhere else with it?

BD: Yeah – *Business Week*.

JC: (The tape of Ray Charles and the Raylettes that has been counterpointing our banter has now given way to Joe Cocker's *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*) It's strange, but I noticed in your last two performances that your phrasing and the timbre of your voice at certain points resemble those of Little Anthony, Smokey Robinson and Gene Chandler. Are you aware of this?

BD: No. When your environment changes, you change. You've got to go on, and you find new friends. Turn around one day and you're on a different stage, with a new set of characters.

JC: In your new song, *No Time To Think*, you list a series of qualities and concepts like loneliness, humility, nobility, patriotism, etc.

BD: Is pregnancy in there?

JC: It wasn't in there the last time I heard it. But I was thinking that it's these kinds of concepts that both free and imprison a person. What do you think?

BD: I never have any time to think.

JC: I should have known you'd say something like that. Maybe someone else should be up here doing this interview – a different character.

BD: Someone who's not so knowledgeable. You're too knowledgeable.

JC: I had the idea of just asking you the questions from *A Hard Rain's A Gonna Fall*: Where have you been? What did you see? What did you hear? Whom did you meet? What'll you do now?

BD: (Laughing) **I'd be here the rest of my life talking to you... Just look outside the window at the picket fences and the pine trees. New England falls are so beautiful, aren't they. Look at those two kids playing by the train tracks. They remind me of myself. Both of them.**

JC: Did you ever lie down on the tracks?

BD: Not personally. I once knew someone who did.

JC: What happened?

BD: I lost track of him... You should describe in your interview this village we're passing through, Jonathan. It's real special. Go ahead, describe it.

JC: There's a little pond at the edge of the road...

BD: ...and here's the Stroudwater Baptist Church. We just turned the corner and are heading on down... I'll tell you in a minute. What do you call this kind of architecture?... Look at the ducks over there...

JC: ...and that little waterfall.

BD: This is Garrison Street we've just passed Garrison Street – probably never will again.

JC: You're never coming back?

BD: Oh, I bet we come back.

JC: Clothes on the line behind that house.

BD: Yeah, clothes on the line. Someone's frying chicken – didn't Kris Kristofferson say something like that? You don't see this in New York City... well, maybe at McDonald's. (The bus pulls into the airport.) **This may be our last chance to talk, Jonathan. I hope we've got it down right this time.**

The Plane

BD: Let's find something to talk about.

JC: Maybe I should ask a question that Jann Wenner, the editor of *Rolling Stone*, wanted to ask you.

BD: Ask me one of his.

JC: Okay, why are you doing this tour?

BD: Well, why did I do the last one? I'm doing this one for the same reason I did the last one.

JC: And what reason was that?

BD: It was for the same reason that I did the one before that. I'm doing this tour for one reason or another, I can't remember what the reason is anymore.

JC: Articles about the tour always mention that you're doing it for the money.

BD: They always say that. There are more important things in the world than money. It means that to the people who write these articles, the most important thing in the world is money. They could be saying I'm doing the tour to meet girls or to see the world. Actually, it's all I know how to do. Ask Muhammad Ali why he fights one more fight. Go ask Marlon Brando why he makes one more movie. Ask Mick Jagger why he goes on the road. See what kind of answers you come up with. Is it so surprising I'm on the road? What else would I be doing in this life – meditating on the mountain? Whatever someone finds fulfilling, whatever his or her purpose is -that's all it is.

JC: You recently said that you do new versions of your older songs because you believe in them – as if to believe in something is to make it real.

BD: They are real, and that's why I keep doing them. As I said before, the reason for the new versions is that I've changed. You meet new people in your life, you're involved on different levels with people. Love is a force, so when a force comes in your life -and there's love surrounding you – you can do anything.

JC: Is that what's happening, to you now?

BD: Something similar to that, yeah.

JC: When you introduce the singers onstage as your childhood sweethearts, your present girlfriend, your former girlfriend – is that literal?

BD: Oh, of course.

JC: May I list the themes I found on *Street-Legal*?

BD: Yeah.

JC: Survival, homelessness, trust, betrayal, sacrifice, exile, tyranny and victimization.

BD: All right, those things go through all of my songs because I feel those things. And those feelings touch me, so naturally they're going to appear in the songs. I've got twenty-two or twenty-three albums out on Columbia alone and about seventy-five bootleg records floating around, so it gets to a point where it doesn't matter anymore. You want each new record to be your best, but you know you're going to write more songs and make another album anyway. People who get hit with the new album for the first time... it surprises them, it's coming at them from someplace and maybe they haven't thought about things that way. But that's not for me to say. That's my life, and if they can find identity in that, okay – and if they can't, that's okay, too.

JC: A song like *No Time To Think* sounds like it comes from a very deep dream.

BD: Maybe, because we're all dreaming, and these songs come close to getting inside that dream. It's all a dream anyway.

JC: As in a dream lines from one song seem to connect with lines from another. For example: "I couldn't tell her what my private thoughts were / But she had some way of finding them out" in *Where Are You Tonight?* and "The captain waits above the celebration / Sending his thoughts to a beloved maid" in *Changing of the Guards*.

BD: I'm the first person who'll put it to you and the last person who'll explain it to you. Those questions can be answered dozens of different ways, and I'm sure they're all legitimate. Everybody sees in the mirror what he sees – no two people see the same thing.

JC: Usually you don't specify things or people in your songs. We don't know who Marcel and St. John are in *Where Are You Tonight?* or who the "partner in crime" is in that same song...

BD: Who isn't your partner in crime?

JC: But in a song like *Sara* you seem fairly literal.

BD: I've heard it said that Dylan was never as truthful as when he wrote *Blood On The Tracks*, but that wasn't necessarily truth it was just perceptive. Or when people say *Sara* was written for "his wife Sara" – it doesn't necessarily have to be about her just because my wife's name happened to be Sara. Anyway, was it the real Sara or the Sara in the dream? I still don't know.

JC: Is *Is Your Love in Vain?* to be taken literally? You've been accused of being chauvinistic in that song, especially in the line "Can you cook and sew make flowers grow?"

BD: That criticism comes from people who think that women should be karate instructors or airplane pilots. I'm not knocking that – everyone should achieve what she wants to achieve – but when a man's looking for a woman, he ain't looking for a woman who's an airplane pilot. He's looking for a woman to help him out and support him, to hold up one end while he holds up another.

JC: Is that the kind of woman you're looking for?

BD: What makes you think I'm looking for any woman?

JC: You could say that the song isn't necessarily about you, yet some people think that you're singing about yourself and your needs.

BD: Yeah, well, I'm everybody anyway.

JC: There's a lot of talk about magic in *Street-Legal*. "I wish I was a magician / I would wave a wand and tie back the bond / That we've both gone beyond" in *We Better Talk This Over*, "But the magician is much quicker and his game / Is much thicker than blood" in *No Time to Think*.

BD: These are things I'm really interested in, and it's taken me a while to get back to it. Right through the time of *Blonde on Blonde* I was doing it unconsciously. Then one day I was half-stepping, and the lights went out. And since that point, I more or less had amnesia. Now, you can take that statement as literally or metaphysically as you need to, but that's what happened to me. It took me a long time to get to do consciously what I used to be able to do unconsciously.

It happens to everybody. Think about the periods when people don't do anything, or they lose it and have to regain it, or lose it and gain something else. So it's taken me all this time, and the records I made along the way were like openers – trying to figure out whether it was this way or that way, just what is it, what's the simplest way I can tell the story and make this feeling real.

So now I'm connected back, and I don't know how long I'll be there because I don't know how long I'm going to live. But what comes now is for real and from a place that's — I don't know, I don't care who else cares about it. *John Wesley Harding* was a fearful album – just dealing with fear (laughing)**, but dealing with the devil in a fearful way, almost. All I wanted to do was to get the words right. It was courageous to do it because I could have not done it, too. Anyway, on *Nashville Skyline* you had to read between the lines. I was trying to grasp something that would lead me on to where I thought I should be, and it didn't go nowhere – it just went down, down, down. I couldn't be anybody but myself, and at that point I didn't know it or want to know it.**

I was convinced I wasn't going to do anything else, and I had the good fortune to meet a man in New York City who taught me how to see. He put my mind and my hand and my eye together in a way that allowed me to do consciously what I unconsciously felt. And I didn't know how to pull it off. I wasn't sure it could be done in songs because I'd never written a song like that. But when I started doing it, the first album I made was *Blood on the Tracks*. Everybody agrees that that was pretty different, and what's different about it is that there's a code in the lyrics and also there's no sense of time. There's no respect for it: you've got yesterday, today and tomorrow all in the same room, and there's very little that you can't imagine not happening.

JC: In *Tarantula* you write about a woman named Justine who tells you that "only God can be everywhere at the same Time and Space."

BD: That's right, but that was unconscious. And that drilled me down – doing it unconsciously as doing it like a primitive, and it took everything out of me. Everything was gone; I was drained. I found out later that it was much wiser to do it consciously, and it could let things be much stronger, too. Actually, you might even live longer, but I'm not sure about that.

From that point I went on to *Desire*, which I wrote with Jacques Levy. And I don't remember who wrote that. And then I disappeared for a while. Went on the Rolling Thunder tour, made *Renaldo and Clara* – in which I also used that quality of no-time. And I believe that that concept of creation is more real and true than that which does have time.

When you feel in your gut what you are and then dynamically pursue it – don't back down and don't give up – then you're going to mystify a lot of folks. Some people say, "I don't like him anymore." But other people do, and my crowd gets bigger and bigger. But who cares, really (laughing)**? If you fall down and you're hurting, you care about that immediate situation – if you have the energy to care. Who really cares? It's like that line – how does it go?-"Propaganda, who really cares?..."**

JC: I wanted to ask you about love.

BD: Go ahead, but I'm not too qualified on that subject. Love comes from the Lord – it keeps all of us going. If you want it, you got it.

JC: You've described and communicated the idea of two aspects of love – the love that longs for commitment and the love that longs to be free. Which is the most real to you?

BD: All of it. It's all love that needs to be love.

JC: You often sing about having a twin, a sister/wife, a dreamlover for one's life.

BD: Everyone feels these feelings. People don't like to admit that that's the way things are because it's too confusing.

JC: A famous short poem by William Blake goes. "He who binds to himself a joy / Doth the winged life destroy / But he who kisses the joy as it flies / Lives in Eternity's sun rise."

BD: Allen Ginsberg quoted that to me all the time. Blake's been a big influence on Kristofferson, too.

JC: What about soul mates?

BD: What about them?

JC: Do they exist?

BD: Sure, they do, but sometimes you never meet them. A soul mate... what do they mean by soul mate? There's a male and a female in everyone, don't they say that? So I guess the soul mate would be the physical mate of the soul. But that would mean we're supposed to be with just one other person. Is a soul mate a romantic notion or is there real truth in that, señor?

JC: That's what I was asking you.

BD: How would I know?

JC: Well a lot of your songs are concerned with that... Someone once said that one's real feelings come out when one's separated from somebody one loves.

BD: Who said that?

JC: Nietzsche.

BD: Well, I guess he's right. Your real feelings do come out when you're free to be alone. Most people draw a line that they don't want you to cross – that's what happens in most petty relationships.

JC: In a song such as *Like a Rolling Stone* and now *Where Are You Tonight?* and *No Time To Think*, you seem to tear away and remove the layers of social identity – burn away the "rinds of received reality" and bring us back to the zero state.

BD: That's right. "Stripped of all virtue as you crawl through the dirt/You can give but you cannot receive." Well, I said it.

(At this point the pilot announces that we'll be landing in five minutes.)

JC: Just a few quick questions before we land. Coming back to *Changing Of The Guards*...

BD: It means something different every time I sing it.

JC: The lines, "She's smelling sweet like the meadows where she was born/On Midsummer's eve, near the tower," are so quiet and pure.

BD: Oh, yeah?

JC: Those lines seem to go back a thousand years into the past.

BD: They do. *Changing Of The Guards* is a thousand years old. Woody Guthrie said he just picked songs out of the air. That means that they were already there and that he was tuned into them. *Changing Of The Guards* might be a song that might have been there for thousands of years, sailing around in the mist, and one day I just tuned into it. Just like *Tupelo Honey* was floating around and Van Morrison came by.

JC: It's been said that the Stones' song, – *Some Girls*, hints at being about you a bit.

BD: I've never lived at Zuma Beach.

JC: Jagger imitates your phrasing, though.

BD: He always does... He imitates Otis Redding, too, and Riley Puckett and Slim Harpo.

JC: *In One More Cup of Coffee* you sing about a sister who sees the future, and in *Changing Of The Guards* you sing about "treacherous young witches."

BD: I meet witchy women. Somehow I attract them. I wish they'd leave me alone.

JC: Well, there are some good witches, too, though that voodoo girl in *New Pony* was giving you some trouble.

BD: That's right. By the way, the Miss X in that song is Miss X, not ex...

JC: In *We Better Talk This Over*, is the line, "I'm exiled, you can't convert me," is some way about being Jewish?

BD: Listen, I don't know how Jewish I am because I've got blue eyes. My grandparents were from Russia, and going back that far, which one of those women didn't get raped by the Cossacks? So there's plenty of Russian in me, I'm sure. Otherwise, I wouldn't be the way I am.

JC: Do you agree with Octavia Paz' idea that "all of us are alone, because all of us are two"?

BD: I can't disagree, but I've got to think there's more than two. didn't Leonard Cohen sing something like "I'm the one who goes from nothing to two"? I don't remember.

JC: We're back to numbers.

BD: Leonard Cohen was really interested in numbers "I'm the one who goes from nothing to one."

JC: You're a Gemini, and the Gemini twins have been seen by one writer, Marius Schneider, as symbols of the "harmonious ambiguity of paradise and inferno, love and hate, peace and war, birth and death, praise and insult, clarity and obscurity, scorching rocks and swamps surrounding the fountains and waters of salvation." That sounds like a good description of some of your new songs.

BD: Right, but you can't choose the month of the year you're born in.

JC: "Sacrifice is the code of the road" is what you sing in *Where Are You Tonight*? To die before dying, shedding your skin, making new songs out of old ones.

BD: That's my mission in life... "He not busy being born is busy dying." Did you bring your parachute?

JC: The interview was that bad, huh?

BD: (Talking to a friend) **Bring a parachute for Jonathan.**

JC: I'd prefer the pathway that leads up to the stars.

<u>The Dressing Room</u>

I ran into Dylan backstage half an hour before a sound check at the Veterans' Memorial Coliseum in New Haven. He invited me into his room, where we concluded our talk.

JC: When I was waiting to pick up my ticket for your Portland concert last night, I happened to ask the woman behind the desk where all these kids were coming from. And she said: "For Bobby Dylan, from heaven – for Black Sabbath, who knows?"

BD: Well, I believe it, don't you? Where else could my particular audience come from?

JC: I've already met two angelic types – one in your dressing room here in New Haven, the other the girl whom you knew fifteen years ago who brought you a breakfast in Portland.

BD: They're all angels... But I wanted to ask you about something Paul Wasserman [who's in charge of Dylan's publicity] **said that you said to him, and that is: "A genius can't be a genius on instinct alone."**

JC: I said that? Maybe, but really late at night.

BD: Well, I disagree. I believe that instinct is what makes a genius a genius.

JC: What do you think of all the criticisms of *Street Legal*?

BD: I read some of them. In fact, I didn't understand them. I don't think these people have had the experiences I've had to write those songs. The reviews didn't strike me as being particularly interesting one way or another, or as compelling to my particular scene. I don't know who these people are. They don't travel in the same crowd, anyway. So it would be like me criticizing Pancho Villa.

JC: The reviews in this country of *Renaldo and Clara* weren't good, either. The writers went out of their way to call you presumptuous, pretentious and egocentric.

BD: These people probably don't like to eat what I like to eat, they probably don't like the same things I like, or the same people. Look, just one time I'd like to see any one of those assholes try and do what I do. Just once let one of them write a song to show how they feel and sing it in front of 10, let alone 10,000 or 100,000 people. I'd like to see them just try that one time.

JC: Some of theses critics have suggested that you need more sophisticated record production.

BD: I probably do. The truth of it is that I can hear the same sounds that other people like to hear, too. But I don't like to spend the time trying to get those sounds in the studio.

JC: So you're really not a producer type?

BD: I'm not. Some musicians like to spend a lot of time in the studio. But a lot of people try to make something out of nothing. If you don't have a good song, you can go into the studio and make it appear to be good, but that stuff don't last.

JC: You've had producers – Tom Wilson, Bob Johnston, Don DeVito...

BD: But that wasn't all that sophisticated I mean, John Hammond produced my first record, and it was a matter of singing into a microphone. He'd say, "It sounded good to me," and you'd go on to the next song. That's still the way I do it. Nowadays, you start out with anything but the song – the drum track, for instance -and you take a week getting the instruments all sounding the way they should. They put down the rhythm track or whatever sound they want to hear in the ghost tracks. If you have a good song, it doesn't matter how well or badly it's produced. Okay, my records aren't produced that well, I admit it.

JC: Personally, I love the "primitive" sound of Buddy Holly demo tapes or the original Chuck Berry discs.

BD: But in those days they recorded on different equipment, and the records were thicker. If you buy one of my early records – and you can't today – they weren't like Saran Wrap, as they are now. There was quality to them... and the machinery was different and the boards were different. The Beach Boys did stuff on two-track in the garage.

JC: But you do need a producer now?

BD: I think so. You see, in the recent past my method, when I had the songs, was to go in, record them and put them out. Now I'm writing songs on the run again – they're dear to me, the songs I'm doing now – and I can't perfect them. So if I can just block time out, here and there, I can work on an album the way the Eagles do. I've got so many records

out there it doesn't matter when I put out a new one. I could release one a year from now – start working on it in January and have it produced right.

JC: What's the longest it's taken you to record a song?

BD: About six or seven hours. It took us a week to make *Street Legal* – we mixed it the following week and put it out the week after. If we hadn't done it that fast we wouldn't have made an album at all, because we were ready to go back on the road.

JC: You've got a bigger sound now – on record and onstage – than you've ever had before.

BD: I do – and I might hire two more girls and an elephant – but it doesn't matter how big the sound gets as long as it's behind me emphasizing the song. It's still pretty simple. There's nothing like it in Vegas – no matter what you've heard – and it's anything but disco. It's not rock & roll – my roots go back to the Thirties, not the Fifties.

JC: On this tour, you've again been changing some of the radically new versions of songs that I heard you perform in Europe this past summer.

BD: Yeah, we've changed them around some – it's a different tour and a different show. The band has to relearn the songs, but they're fast and the best at that.

JC: Do you write songs now with them in mind?

BD: I've had this sound ever since I was a kid – what grabs my heart I had to play alone for a long time, and that was good because by playing alone I had to write songs. That's what I didn't do when I first started out, just playing available songs with a three-piece honky-tonk band in my hometown. But when I was first living in New York City – do you remember the old Madison Square Garden? Well, they used to have gospel shows there every Sunday, and you could see everyone from the Five Blind Boys, the Soul Stirrers and the Swan Silvertones to Clara Ward and the Mighty Clouds of Joy. I went up there every Sunday. I'd listen to that and Big Bill Broonzy. Then I heard the Clancy Brothers and hung out with them – all of their drinking songs, their revolutionary and damsel-in-distress songs. And I listened to Jean Ritchie, Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly.

JC: What about the doo-wop groups?

BD: They played at shows, and those artists didn't have to be onstage for more than twenty minutes. They just got on and got off, and that was never what I wanted to do. I used to go to the Brooklyn Fox a lot, but the band I liked the best at that time was Bobby Blue Bland's, and I heard them at the Apollo. But the people whose floors I was sleeping on were all into the Country Gentlemen, Uncle Dave Macon, the Stanley Brothers, Bill Monroe. So I heard all that, too.

JC: You seem to like music that's real and uncorrupted, no matter what it's tradition. But some of your folk-music followers didn't care much for your own musical changes.

BD: But don't forget that when I played *Maggie's Farm* electric at Newport, that was something I would have done years before. They thought I didn't know what I was doing and that I'd slipped over the edge, but the truth is... Kooper and Michael Bloomfield remember that scene very well. And what the newspapers say happened didn't actually happen that way. There wasn't a whole lot of resistance in the crowd. Don't forget they weren't equipped for what we were doing with the sound. But I had a legitimate right to do that.

JC: The Beatles and the Rolling Stones were already popular in this country at that time, though.

BD: I remember hanging out with Brian Jones in 1964. Brian could play the blues. He was an excellent guitar player – he seemed afraid to sing for some reason – but he could play note for note what Robert Johnson or Son House played.

JC: In songs like *Buckets Of Rain* or *New Pony*, you seem just to go in and out of musical traditions, pick up what you want and need, and transform them as you please.

BD: That's basically what I do, but so do the Stones. Mick and Keith knew all that music. America's filled with all kinds of different music.

JC: When you sang *Baby Stop Crying* the other night in Portland, I remember thinking that your voice sounded as if it combined the following qualities: tenderness, sarcasm, outraged violence, indignation, insouciant malice and wariness.

BD: The man in that song has his hand out and is not afraid of getting it bit.

JC: He sounds stronger than the woman he's singing to and about.

BD: Not necessarily. The roles could be reversed at any time – don't you remember To Ramona? *"And someday maybe, who knows baby, I'll come and be cryin' to you."*

JC: In the song *Baby Stop Crying* it sounds as if the singer is getting rejected – that the woman's in love with someone else.

BD: She probably is.

JC: There's also a "bad man" in the song. It's almost as if three or four different movies were taking place in one song all held together by the chorus. And the same thing seems to be happening in *Changing Of The Guards* and some of your other new songs. What's that all about?

BD: Lord knows.

JC: How come you write in that way?

BD: I wouldn't be doing it unless some power higher than myself were guiding me on. I wouldn't be here this long. Let me put it another way... What was the question?

JC: There are all these different levels in many of your present songs.

BD: That's right, and that's because my mind and my heart work on all those levels. Shit, I don't want to be chained down to the same old level all the time.

JC: I've seen you tell people who don't know you that some other person standing nearby is you.

BD: Well sure, if some old fluff ball comes wandering in looking for the real Bob Dylan, I'll direct him down the line, but I can't be held accountable for that.

JC: A poet and critic named Elizabeth Sewell once wrote "Discovery, in science and poetry, is a mythological situation in which the mind unites with a figure of its own devising as a means toward understanding the world." And it seems as if you have created a figure named Bob Dylan.

BD: I didn't create Bob Dylan. Bob Dylan has always been here... always was. When I was a child, there was Bob Dylan. And before I was born, there was Bob Dylan.

JC: Why did you have to play that role?

BD: I'm not sure. Maybe I was best equipped to do it.

JC: The composer Arnold Schonberg once said the same thing: Someone had to be Arnold Schonberg.

BD: Sometimes your parents don't even know who you are. No one knows but you. Lord, if your own parents don't know who you are, who else in the world is there who would know except you?

JC: Then why do children keep on wanting things from their parents they can't give them?

BD: Misunderstanding.

JC: In contradistinction to the idea of being true to oneself, there's an idea of the personality – suggested by Yeats – which states that "man is nothing until he's united to an image." You seem to have your foot in both camps.

BD: I don't know about that. Sometimes I think I'm a ghost. Don't you have to have some poetic sense to be involved in what we're talking about? It's like what you were saying about people putting my record down. I couldn't care less if they're doing that, but, I mean, who are these people, what qualifications do they have? Are they poets, are they musicians? You find me some musician or poet, and then maybe we'll talk. Maybe that person will know something I don't know, and I'll see it that way.

That could happen. I'm not almighty. But my feelings come from the gut, and I'm not too concerned with someone whose feelings come from his head. That don't bother me none.

This criticism has been going on for a long time. It's like a lover: you like somebody, and then you don't want to like them anymore because you're afraid to admit to yourself that you like them so much... I don't know, you've just got to try, try to do some good for somebody. The world is full of nonsupporters and backbiters – people who chew on wet rags. But It's also filled with people who love you

JC: There are lines in your new songs about the one you love being so hard to recognize, or about feeling displaced and in exile. It seems as if the tyranny of love makes people unhappy.

BD: That's the tyranny of man-woman love. That ain't too much love.

JC: What's your idea of love?

BD: (Pause) **Love like a driving wheel. That's my idea of love.**

JC: What about Cupid with his bows and arrows aimed towards your heart?

BD: Naw, Cupid comes in a beard and a mustache, you know. Cupid has dark hair.

23 September 1978
Marc Rowland Interview, Rochester

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 693-703.

Marc Rowland (MR) interviews Dylan in Rochester prior to his concert at the Rochester Auditorium. The interview was broadcast on US radio (I don't know what program). The transcript is from the circulating tape.

MR: I guess we only have a few minutes, so I guess the best thing to start with would be to ask you about the music that you're playing now.

BD: Did you... did you get the review of *Renaldo and Clara* with you. Did you bring one?

MR: I didn't, Bob, because Paul... I, you know, because Paul (Wasserman) didn't mention it or anything.

BD: Oh I really wanted to see it.

MR: Well I'd be glad to send it to you.

BD: Oh, okay.

MR: You know, I don't know if he told you anything about it, but I liked the movie a lot and I wrote at length about it.

BD: Yeah.

MR: Which er... unfortunately, I guess, makes it kinda unusual, in that respect, as far as the people that wrote about it.

BD: Yes.

MR: I understand that you just, um, that there's a cut version now, that you re-edited, that you edited it all again.

BD: Yes.

MR: Why did you do that?

BD: Oh well, for commercial reasons, you know. The theatre owners couldn't show a four hour movie.

MR: Uh huh, yeah. Did you think... I mean, when you were making it did you think that it was going to...

BD: Well, no, no. It's two different films, the way I heard it. I haven't seen the two hour version.

MR: Uh huh.

BD: But ah, didn't think we'd have to do that, no, we'd be... what, after making the four hour version it was very simple cutting it down to two hours.

MR: Because... what did you do? Did you just basically leave the music and...

BD: No, we just took it and er... hacked it up... took things out which were in big, er... David Blue must have been in it for twenty minutes so we just started right there and took him out completely, took him out entirely.

MR: Yeah.

BD: And that led to other changes which were pretty simp... it only took us a day or two, you know.

MR: Uh huh. Do you, I mean, how do you feel about having...?

BD: Well, for me, the long version is the movie, you know. The shorter version – if people like that, that's fine.

MR: Uh huh.

BD: But the long version is really what they should see. You know, and if they wanna book the long version, they can.

MR: It's still possible?

BD: Yeah, oh yeah.

MR: They showed it at the Cannes Festival.

BD: They did, yeah. Those prints weren't destroyed. They still exist, but, er... there's also a two hour version.

Non interview section when colleague of Dylan enters with new pair of shoes for him (size 8 and one half for interest – presumably 8½ US not UK).

MR: I assume... I do know that basically... that it didn't hold, the version that... I mean, the version that... I mean... it's your movie basically. (Conversation considerably disrupted by sound of shoes being wrapped up in place in boxes).

BD: Well I can't say I'm not disappointed, but it's a film you know, and it might take people a long time to get around to it. We made one film in the '60s people still haven't gotten around to yet.

MR: Is that, erm... *Eat The Document*?

BD: Yeah.

MR: Is that the one?

BD: Yeah.

MR: I had an opportunity to talk to Allen Ginsberg a while ago and he was talking about that. What is it exactly that's kept that from...

BD: Just commercial reasons, er.. you know, commercially it's just not saleable, I guess, and, erm... I don't know why it wouldn't be, but it just, you know, isn't. People just want to see...

MR: I mean, do you see that at all as symptomatic, I... ?

BD: No. It doesn't matter to me. It doesn't matter to me 'cause I've got this to do. This is my first love really.

MR: Yeah, but I meant more in terms of, erm... just that it does seem to me anyway that there's less of, even often years ago, there's less of a willingness for people to be challenged by art forms.

BD: Not so in Europe.

MR: Oh, no, not in Europe. I mean that's true also of music in Europe.

BD: Yeah, you have to take a... you have to consider er... you know, the whole world when you've something to create. And it has been received well over there, the whole four hour version of *Renaldo and Clara*. But that's all in the past now.

MR: Yeah.

BD: You know, I'm gonna go ahead and make another movie. I don't know whether that's gonna get accepted either, you know, but it's not really too much of my concern.

MR: Yeah, but it's something, you know... it's here that the problem is. I mean, we're like products of the culture and... a little bit weird or disorientated, the way that say jazz musicians feel... that their music doesn't, you know. But in this case it's not your music, it's your movies... 'cause it's an American movie really.

BD: It is. It is, but so is the *Reader's Digest* you know and *Reader's Digest*...

MR: Right.

BD: The way I see it is that people thought I should have made a commercial or something, and a movie is not a commercial. There's no product that it's selling, there's no certain person that it's, er... it isn't a commercial. But, er, as far as being vague and obscure like many critics said it was. It wasn't really you know, it wasn't anything like there that was so obscure. If anything it was... it tripped very lightly, you know.

MR: Right, and I thought there was like a logical connection, or a reasonable connection between each vignette and the music, the song that was on each side of it. I mean...

BD: That's right, yeah.

MR: ...you know, that's just A to B. I don't know how much more people would want than that, just spelled out.

BD: Well, then if it left a feeling with you then it achieved it's purpose.

MR: For me.

BD: Yeah.

MR: I'd like to talk a little bit more about the music you're playing now. It seems radically different from, obviously, the Rolling Thunder tour.

BD: Well, yeah. Well, I don't know how radically different it is from any of the things I've done in the past, considering the elements I have in this band I've always used before. I made an album called *New Morning* and we used singers on just about every track, so I've done that. As far as, er, using the horn sound, I used the horn sound in Nashville on *Rainy Day Women*, you know, and as far as guitar and drums, I haven't made too many albums without guitar... lead guitar, bass guitar and drums. Organ, same thing... I'll use it every once in a while, but I have used it before. We had an organ sound on *Like A Rolling Stone*. So, you know, there isn't really anything new, just a bunch of pieces put together.

MR: Well, but it is a different sound. I mean, the combination's different.

BD: It is, it's different, because I've heard all those kinds of musics and er... it's easy to put together a new sound. It's not really the sound that I'm looking for, it's the emphasis of being in the right place.

MR: All right... er... of course, the album is one thing, but when I saw your show a couple of nights ago it was something else again because there were so many songs of yours that are so famous and classic from the sixties and that those are quite different from the versions, you know, that were recorded then.

BD: Well, you can check all those out. You can check *Bob Dylan and The Band* now from Newport playing *Like A Rolling Stone*, or *Bob Dylan and The Band* tour, there are tapes of that, playing *Like A Rolling Stone*. I did *Like A Rolling Stone* on the 1974 tour; there's a record of that out.

MR: Sure.

BD: And you can... well, there is no record of these performances out, except in Japan and I don't know how true to where we are now, that record is. But this just... it really isn't that different. If I was to step up there with a thirty piece orchestra, you know, and a light show, then that might be a considerable difference, then I might be trying to emphasise something other than the music in some kinda way. But I'm still back, back where, you know... still back in a simple way.

MR: Right. No, I mean, I felt, I mean it's certainly very successful, it's wonderful and I did feel the lyrics, I mean... your poetry is not at all obfuscated by the new arrangements, which is important – extremely.

BD: Yeah, well... I care more about the poetry of it, you know, getting it across, and I'm aware of that, just as well as any critic is.

MR: Yeah, well, I mean, I have to ask you, I mean, it must really bug you to have that kind of appellations that are tossed out, like Vegas, and disco and obvious connotations that go along with that?

BD: Um... that's just ignorance. Those people who would say something like that, first of all, is given a handle, er, you know, they gotta do that, so they can't really categorise me, or they couldn't before, so now maybe they wanna say, well, Vegas or disco. Well, what does that mean, you know. I mean, I don't know what that means. I've been to Vegas before and I've never heard any bands like this in Vegas. So I don't know what that means. B. B. King plays in Vegas, Merle Haggard plays in Vegas. So, I mean... what is that... what are they saying, you know? Is that a negative thing, Vegas ? I don't know.

MR: I don't know either.

BD: I'm not trying to defend or offend Vegas, but to a lotta people it's important to go there and see who they wanna see. I don't understand what that means as far as disco goes... we're not a disco band. I used to hear disco bands in New York, you know, the likes of Johnny Pacheco, you know, and I always considered that disco music. Erm, you know, in ballrooms, that's what it was, it was real disco. What's happening now is just that people getting together in clubs and pumping it over big systems and they're dancing to

it. And the bass is stronger, and the drums are a little stronger, but mainly it's the bass. So we are not a disco band either, like I say, it's just a... I don't know; I don't take offence at any of these handles, but they're certainly not right. I mean, this music I'm playing just supports the lyrics that I write.

MR: Right, right. Well, I agree. I guess, you know, that it meant some sort of slickness that was imposing some artificiality...

BD: See, if... you can't win. I mean, you go and do something like Rolling Thunder, which we did in small halls, smaller halls – we did play some big halls – but we also played many many smaller halls... er, er... and what did they say, they say it's too ragged, you know, they say it's just a bunch of Gypsies up there, you know, traveling on the road playing with... making no attempt to do a show. That's what they say. So, what happens? You put on... you get out of your street clothes and you put on something else and they say it's slick. You know... so, I mean, it's... if they're out to say something, they're going to say something and there's very little you can say against it unless you want to defend yourself against the wind, you know.

MR: Do you ever read, I mean do you read that stuff much. Does it really...

BD: I don't, no. How were the reviews in Boston?

MR: Well, our paper wrote really glowing reviews about the album, and the show – I'll be writing it next week and I'll be very positive. And all the other ones – *The Globe* had a review that was kind of wishy-washy, that, you know, said that, you know, that it seemed like it didn't really understand what was going on.

BD: Well, they probably don't. They didn't understand it in the sixties either. They didn't under... one thing that they really understood was the Bob Dylan / Band tour. They seemed to understand that although... and that was because there was little resistance at the time – anyone who knew anything at all or felt anything at all knew something was wrong but didn't exactly know what. Er, erm... but they didn't understand because there's like, in my mind – I'm not really that commercial an artist... I've got a great deal of fame in legendary proportions, you know, so people are going to show up. But as far as being commercial, I'm not commercial in the, you know, in the, you know, in the Sigwayne Nillson sense or Kiss sense, you know. I'm not out there trying to reach people with myself, it's the songs I care about and the lyrics I'm trying to reach them with. And, er, you know, that's the most I can do. I can't be really too concerned with all this feedback or else. I... you know... I can't.

MR: There's... was one of the reasons for the band you have now is it like, you know, to make it a different step from the Rollin' Thunder tour? Like you had done that and...

BD: No, Rolling Thunder tour take... that was never meant to be long lived.

MR: Uh huh, that's true. It was just gonna be a little one really.

BD: Right. And I went out on that tour to find some money to support that film which we had shot and it was a different tour the second time too, er... but it was never meant to be something which should exist for ever and ever, it was just a, you know, just a one-time thing and people saw it... they would only see it for that one short time and then they'd be gone and that's exactly what happened. So, er, you know, I don't know what kind of... how it exists in people minds. Er, this has developed over a long period of time, er... I mean it just took me a while to get back to getting the band together, more than on the road... going this away and that away for a lot of years, you know, wondering what to do and if I were to say, you know, I can't think this anymore, I just gotta get back to what I do, what I really do.

MR: This is still a name. Obviously it's still...

BD: Yeah, and it doesn't bother me, er what, you know, what happens in the papers although I know it's important to some degree, but when you get crowds like we get that's really all that matters. Every night I'm looking out to see who comes and see those people react in an honest way. It's more important than all, you know, all those people that write. Good or bad, it's nice to have somebody to catch on, to know what you're

doing and appreciate it but, then again, no-one can take that away from you, you know. What happens, I mean you saw what happened at Boston, I mean, that's the Boston that I know and those are the people – when I think of Boston that's what I think of, those people who've come to the show, and...

MR: Well, no. I don't want to interrupt but, but what I was going to say – what, er how do you feel or what would you do if, if you were doing the exact same thing that you were doing now and no-one was reacting. If...

BD: If no-one was reacting? Well, um... I don't know what I would do. I would still do it. I would probably have to tone it down some and get, get... find some place where people were reacting, that's what I'd have to do. In one sense if people weren't going to react to me they wouldn't be there to begin with.

MR: Right.

BD: Er, and in, you know, in another sense, er... I've had all kinds of crowds, all kinds of audiences and I've been through a whole lot, with the crowd, with the audience. Sometimes, they've, you know, supported me in there, sometimes they didn't. But, er, with bucklers(?) **on, you know, and, er... why, they do understand because I believe now they understand no matter what anybody says.**

MR: Yeah. Oh, I do too. But, I guess I meant that in any way that what goes on in your mind - your conceptions – does that balance, do you use...

BD: No, no. I've heard music more, probably more, I've probably heard more music than you've experienced, more music than anybody, you know, that I'm playing to. You know what I mean. So I know what I'm doing and I'm taking 'em to a place, you know, that I figure is OK, you know. It isn't, er... I might not er, be able to understand it myself sometimes, but I do know that it's alright and, er, a lot of thought has gone into it. It isn't what they are accustomed to hearing because I don't know anyone else who does what I do. There's a lot of singer-song writers around but I don't know anybody else around who writes the kind of songs I write or who sings 'em the way I sing them or who would think of using the back-up that I would think of using.

MR: Yeah.

BD: So it is different.

MR: Right

BD: Er, I don't know who came in the Garden up there the night before us, or who came in after us. But I know that we have a legitimate right to be there as well as anyone else.

MR: Sure. I was going to ask – in terms of the actual songs that you are writing out, one difference certainly from before is that whatever political, er, connections there are in the song or not, it's overt as they were in... You know, do you think that that's, you know...

BD: Well when you write... for me, for a song writer, a writer, any kind of a er... Any type of a great person who's expressing himself that way... if you're not into your own hip, and you have something to say which is super-important to you, that means you have to be in somebody else's hip. That means the person, whoever's hip you try to get into, has gotta get into. So who's going to open up to you in a world like it is today? Er, people that usually you meet in the current campaign (?) **or in the corner bar of the laundromat, er, in the places where people congregate; if you want to you find people open up to you. You might not know any of these people, you know... Sometimes your best friends won't open up to you, so it has to be impersonal so, erm... But I find lot of times that I don't work with people often enough to meet with because I can tell it's jaded, you know, they're doing it because of some ulterior motive or something like that. So where I get my source of material is mostly now from characters in my life who are there and from just the back roads that I do, that I'm on, and I talk to... most of the people that I talk to in different places in areas of life don't really know who Bob Dylan is. So I seek those places out. I'm more comfortable in a place with a person who wouldn't know who I was.**

MR: It's just that... it could have, erm... I mean, you know, that kind of, more direct... can't work...

BD: Political?

MR: Yeah.

BD: Well, political... my songs never were political in the sense of dogma. I never, er... I never... political...

MR: I didn't mean like, you'd listen to your song and that means you'd vote for a Democrat.

BD: Yeah, yeah, alright. I'm interested in that word because I don't really understand what politics are. I mean, if politics are giving everybody jobs – that's as far as I can understand politics. A man who's got an idea or a man or a woman who's got an idea to put people to work, to take their minds off themselves, er... and keep things rolling in a creative way. Well, that's politics, well then that's politics; as far as somebody getting beat up and going to jail for a crime they didn't do – that's injustice, that's not politics. I'm concerned with injustice, you know, wherever it may be. But I'm not so much interested in politics because I don't know what I would do to give people jobs. I don't know what I'd do to cut back on the taxes. I mean, these are problems, you know, and I don't know who is aware and, and the political system in this country is different from the political system in any other country in the world. They only have two parties and if you're outside of those two parties, you know, you don't really stand a chance. Whereas if you're in Europe or, you know, you could be one of fifty parties and still be equal.

MR: Right.

BD: So, we're talking about politics. I'm not attuned to politics in that way, I'm just attuned to people.

MR: But I guess, I bet, in terms of, well, if you mention injustice and, you know, the other songs like *Hurricane* or *Hattie Carroll*, you know and that obviously is the appendage of a political system that exists.

BD: Right, it exists, but probably some... there is injustice that does exist in probably every country in the world. There's gotta be. What we're talking about is injustice -that's been here as long as man's been here. I'll fight against it like anybody else would, but it's something I don't think one political party can solve.

MR: Yeah, is it... do you see more that songs like what you sing er, can expand someone's consciousness in a way.

BD: Yeah. I believe I've written songs that (next few words unclear) **in people's minds that might see things in different ways. Er, I might just have done that, the truth is I just don't know. I've tried.**

MR: Uh huh, I mean that is one of your goals when you write, I would say.

BD: Yeah, it is, but to be... Phil Ochs used to do that. He used to write... er, um... topical songs with the point of view that, erm... which was his own point of view and, er, I guess a lot of other peoples point of view, but I came up with Phil so I remember him when he came to New York. But somehow somebody who wasn't really interested wasn't gonna believe him anyway, you know what I mean. He was doing... the people who heard it then agreed with him to begin with – OK, right, and it, you know, boosted them up which was good.

MR: Right, it did have that morale factor to it.

BD: Yeah, he was a spokesman for that side. But, as far as going out there along the lines, you know, er, I don't know of how many of those people even heard his songs.

MR: Right, right. I mean it...

BD: I don't know how many records he sold or anything, you know, who know who he reached or whose minds he changed. He's a topical song writer – Woody Guthrie, he's the same way Woody was a, a...

MR: There was something more universal, I think, there.

BD: Yeah, yeah. There was the man beneath the song, his lifestyle. While Phil's songs, I mean, you knew what his lifestyle was, er, you know... Woody Guthrie was a different

sort of, you know, and I think he started it, I think Woody started that unless Joe Hill, if you wanna get back to that part – now those were good songs that Joe Hill wrote, he wrote some real good songs, but that was... in those days martyrs were easy to find and, er... things were pretty simple like it was, you know, like which side are you on? It was down to, you know, this or that. Now, you can't have that point of view anymore because any, you know, person in their right mind just can't, you know, just can't more than choose the right any sides, you know.

MR: Yeah. Right. Again it's like if you get enough sides together, it makes just a circle... you can't differentiate. Also, I mean, I think, that yours – especially the songs that have been written lately are more really attuned to emotions which tend to something that anybody can identify with more than, you know, than a song like Ochs, you know, *We're Not Marching Anymore*. That's, you know, that speaks specifically...

BD: That was a good song. Er, maybe he did change some peoples minds on that. I don't know. He could have. You know, someone could be sitting on a fence and hear a song like that and might just get a little courage to go out and get off that fence one way or another. So... it's possible.

MR: How do you like living in Los Angeles?

BD: This year I've been on the road about, getting on a little, about six months... seven months – I can't see it, this part of my life that I'm not really living anywhere. I don't feel that I've found a, you know, place to live, yet. I've lived in a lot of different places and I just sort of move around. But, um, you know, L.A. is not as high energy as, as... it is, actually, it is. It's not as er... California's different, San Francisco's a different type of city than L.A. But, er, there's a lot of restless energy in L. A. which is... which is... which can't be put to use.

MR: Like static electricity?

BD: Yeah. Yeah. And you can't put it to use because you've got nothing to hit it, you know, nothing to hit against. And, er, I mean there's too much space, you know, or something... I don't know what it is.

MR: Yeah. That's why I asked. It seemed kind of incongruous actually, knowing you from your music, you know.

BD: Well, it's easy, you know, it's, it's sunny all the time, you know what I mean? I know, it's... it's, erm... you know, it's... it's not too crowded... but as far as night-life and... er... being rooted in something out there, I'm not.

MR: Uh, huh. What, doesn't seem like there's roots?

BD: No. I don't feel that out there. It's okay place to be for the time you're there. Like I said, been on the road a lot this year and it's, er, it's all right to start from there.

MR: Uh, huh. Yeah. What were you saying? Do you have, I mean is there a place that you can call home or do you still feel that you're basically on the road?

BD: I do feel that I'm on the road. Sometimes I feel more at home on the road than I do anywhere I've been which scares me. You know, after a period of time, after you've done it long enough, you just get it down, you know, and, er...

MR: That's strange. In a way that's strange that, I mean, you come from a, er, from a tradition that's really, I mean, from the beginning it really does have strong roots, I mean, the whole folk tradition is based on that and I don't really, you know, want to bring in a personal thing but you are a father, you know, you have five kids...

BD: That's right. I don't know how to reason that one out. My kids understand me; they know what I have to do and, er, they know that this is what I must be doing.

MR: That's the most important thing, I guess. Where do you see yourself going from here?

BD: Ah, I really can't say. I'll be on the road next year too, probably just as much as this year. It's just what I do, you know, always done my whole life and that's what I know how to do best.

Assistant enters and says "fifteen, Bob".

BD: What time is it?
MR: Holly, you got the exact time?

Five or ten after, probably ten after.

BD: OK. I don't know what kind of a show it's gonna be tonight. I'm just getting a little bit better myself and one of the girls is really sick.
MR: I gather...
BD: Oh, she can't even talk.
MR: That's too bad.
BD: Yeah. A lot of things have happened, you know, that you can't have a lot of control over. Yes, she's in... we're playing light tonight.
MR: You're playing light.
BD: Yeah. She sings the hard part too, that's a very important part and it won't be there tonight and no-one can compensate for it. But we're working around it, somehow.
MR: Do you find your... are you interested in... it seems like one thing that's really standing out in the last couple of years is that you seem very interested in growing as a musician... is there a whole technical side of it?
BD: Being a musician isn't really that difficult. You just have to... it takes practice and watching the right people. I play just well enough for myself... um... and to write my songs, that's as well as I play. I can play with Billy, erm... intricate things but I'm not all that too much interested in showing off, that side of things... er... I'm not going to come up with any new run that's never been done before. I might, I mean, I might, 'cause I do sit around and play a lot and I come up with different runs and different rhythms and, you know, I could do that, but I, like I say, it's just all practice. I mean, the time you see here is just two and a half or whatever it is, two and a half hours; you don't see the other part that also, you know, conditions those interviewers.

MR: Well, it's obviously a very polished thing... you have to assume it...
BD: It's polished because we've worked hard and we've worked since last January. So, I mean, it's gotta be, by this time, you know, it's gotta be, there's no way it could be there's not gonna be, you know, another kind of a band. If it isn't polished now it ain't ever gonna be polished. It's not polished because it's slick it's polished because really everybody knows what they're doing.
MR: Did a lot of the songs evolve... do you have... I mean the way the song sounds tonight is that something that you heard right from the start, or based contribution...
BD: Well some of the older songs that we're still doing I did hear that way and we've done that way and some of them I feel I hear 'em a different way now. But, er... yeah. I've heard all these songs this way. This is the way I've heard them done. *Maggie's Farm* I always wanted to do this way. I was doing it on the Rolling Thunder tour a similar way but not quite as definite. It had a rhythm in it but it didn't have a rhythm run in it that this one's got.
MR: I don't remember that. I don't know what you even call it. It's like a descending and then ascending...
BD: Da dum da da dum (on musical scale to demonstrate)**.**
MR: Right, yeah, and you also... you seem to be having a lot more fun out there than I ever remember from seeing you before.
BD: Well, it's a lot of fun up there. I haven't had, I haven't had the confidence in the backing group before. That usually has kind of kept me back. Er, er... when there's work to do... when you're hearing things which you don't want to hear and, and other instruments sometimes might be fighting you or your vocals or, that's from my point of view anyway, then it's not gonna be fun. Or when you're working and your sick, it's not

gonna be fun. If I'm sick it's never fun and I've never cancelled a show. Some of them, like, I don't know how I got through like we did a show at Montreal and I was as sick as a dog. I couldn't even, I couldn't move. And I wanted to cancel the show but somehow never got around to it and the people were all there, they were all lined up and I just figured, I didn't want to let 'em down, you know. And, er...

MR: And you tell me you've never cancelled a show.

BD: I don't think so. Not because of er... maybe because I couldn't get there, because it was snowed in or something like that, maybe, you know, a reason like that. I've tried to be there for every show but we played in Montreal and I couldn't... I just couldn't be there. I mean we were giving... the show they saw, I guess they thought was good because they re-acted real positive, but it's one town I definitely want to go back to and play a good show, you know, what I think is good. I didn't think it was good and that bothers me more than anything ever would.

MR: You still have very strong feelings about... about, you know, giving people a really strong, intense, emotional show.

BD: That's because the songs are intense. There's a wide range of emotions there. To me it's like a Shakespeare play, you know, even after all these years, you know, you can still go and see a group doing Shakespeare. It might not be the way it was, you know, when, you know, it was happening but it's a pretty fair account of it, and this is the same way, the songs all run together in a way that if you was going to sit down and break 'em all down you'd have some kind of story there. You really would. It's that... it's more... it's a play. And I'm singing all the songs. Maybe all the elements are out there. You know, a lot of these songs I could see better, you know, with more, I could see them definitely being more romantic and using different elements of theatre but I can't do everything, you know.

MR: Yeah, just a second, I think this has just run out (the tape machine). No, it didn't. Erm, can you do that, can you summon, I mean can... when you sing *Blowin' In The Wind* for what must be thousands and thousands of times.

BD: *Blowin' In The Wind*...

MR: Yeah.

BD: *Blowin' In The Wind* has always been a spiritual. I took it off a song, I don't know whether you ever heard a song called *No More Auction Block*?

MR: No, I don't...

BD: That's a spiritual. *Blowin' in The Wind* it sort of follows the same feeling, erm... it's an old song... it's like, er...

MR: Well, it has the same kind of progression of feeling just like *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*?

BD: Right, right. It's like *This Land Is Your Land* is really an old Carter Family song. I don't know, I mean, there's not really too original, many original melodies around, you know. Er, anyway *Blowin' In The Wind* has always been a spiritual. Always. As a matter of fact the Staples Singers used to sing it and it hasn't been done as a spiritual and I've always seen it and heard it that way. But it's just taken me... I just did it with my principal guitar when I recorded it, Peter Paul and Mary didn't really make it sound spiritual but the feeling we had it had, you know, that's where it was coming from, so I'm not doing it full out to look like a spiritual; you'd hear it in a church but...

MR: But the Gospel (unintelligible)... Well then, take another, I mean, take another song then, I mean because that obviously that has like a timeless quality to it but now, but *Like A Rolling Stone* or any of your other songs that you have played so often, do, I mean, you manage to invest the emotion that you can really feel that as soon as the song begins.

BD: Yeah. Yeah. I have never lost any of that. That's all still inside me. As soon as the, you know, as soon as it happens I start, er...

MR: This may be an off the wall question but do you feel any special responsibility because of what you've done, as for, you know, whatever reasons and, you know, I certainly think that lot of them are qualitative, you know, reach these kind of legendary proportions.

BD: Well, the only responsibility I have is to keep on keeping on. That's my responsibility. As far as responsibility over anything I've done in the past, I let that loose, you know. I can't stay there too long. Legendary proportions, I can't help that. I'm not... if I didn't have them songs I wouldn't be up to legendary proportions. It's those songs that make me what I am and it's me writing those songs which is going to keep me being what I am.

MR: Right, well then the other side of it would be... er... you're not getting tired are you?

BD: No, I've gotta get ready though.

MR: OK. I'll just wrap it up, um... you know, it's a sense... really it's a song, it's not something that you've chose, it's, you know, there's that sense of having a privacy threatened constantly...

BD: Well, that don't bother me really. I understand what people, you know, who... er... no, I don't feel any sense of privacy being threatened – (someone enters room) I've gotta go – I don't hurt from anybody anyway.

MR: Can somebody really... can you really stay forever young?

BD: I'm not sure. I don't know. I wrote that and I felt it in er... when I was sitting there for somebody else anyway when she said what do I hope and wish, you know, and...

MR: And you said as a sort of last...

BD: I used it towards the end of the program, yeah. But I... at this point. And there's a lot of stuff we're not doing anymore, you haven't heard us do *Times They Are A-Changin'*?

MR: Right. No!

BD: So, I don't know. I think so. It's all in the heart, whatever keeps you that way. Keeps you forever young. Forever young doesn't necessarily mean that you don't grow old, but you just have some contact with what put you where you are. You know, keep some type of contact. Anyway...

MR: Listen, thanks a lot. It's been...

BD: OK.

MR: ...special for me.

5 October 1978
Pam Coyle Interview, Baltimore, Maryland

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1047-1050.

Sitting in his hotel room in Baltimore, Dylan was interviewed over the telephone by Pam Coyle, Editor-in-Chief of the *Hibbing High Times*, the newspaper of Bob's old school. According to *On The Tracks #8* –

> In the midst of what was, at the time, his most ambitious tour ever, Dylan announced he would grant only one interview in Minnesota and neighboring states prior to his October 31 concert at the Civic Center in St. Paul. The arrangements for the lone interview were left in the hands of Dylan's brother, David Zimmerman, who was acting as Bob's manager at the time. It was David who, according to the wire service report, came up with the idea of contacting George Peterson, faculty adviser of the *Hibbing High Times* to offer Bob's *alma mater* first dibs on the exclusive interview.

The article appeared in the *Hibbing High Times* of October 18th 1978.

HIGH TIMES Exclusive: An Interview With Bob Dylan

Back in 1956, Bob Dylan decided that he wanted to be a singer. At that time, he was in his early years at Hibbing High School.

Dylan feels that he did not actually try to pursue a career in professional music. **"It was a natural thing. There was nothing else that I wanted to do,"** he said.

Nearly twenty years ago, Dylan began his musical career on the stage of the Hibbing High School auditorium. He said that the audiences reacted favorably when he sang for several of the school's Home-coming and Jacket Jamboree auditorium programs. He also performed at several other functions, including talent shows.

Dylan's audiences are obviously continuing to react "favorably". He will be appearing in St. Paul, at the Civic Center on Tuesday, October 31st as part of a 53-city world-wide tour which began last January.

Looking forward to the St. Paul concert, Dylan said **"It is always a thrill to come back to some place familiar."**

Prior to this current concert tour, he appeared with the Rolling Thunders Tours in 1976 and the Spring of 1977.

Comparing his recent audiences to those of his earlier tours, Dylan said that they are generally reacting the same. He noted, however, that his audiences are younger than they were in previous years. **"The younger ones are coming up to the front now,"** he said.

Although concert touring may be difficult at times, Dylan said that he enjoys touring and that his future plans will include more concert touring. **"Moving from town to town gets in your blood after a while."**

Dylan was born in Duluth and raised in Hibbing, but the nearest concert to his home town is St. Paul, nearly 200 miles away. **"I just play the tours; I don't book them."** he explained. He also said that someday he would like to present a concert in Duluth or Hibbing.

Dylan said that his concert program consists mainly of his older material, although he is writing new songs.

In addition to his original material, he does perform songs by other artists, including Woody Guthrie's *Passion Of Plenty* and *Ballad Of Tom Jones*.

According to Dylan his current songs are much simpler than his earlier ones, but the style is basically the same.

Among his own songs, Dylan said that he has no favorites. **"I like them all for different reasons. Each song is different."** He said that he receives inspiration for his lyrics from **"living my life"**.

Being a native of Northern Minnesota has had an effect on his songs and career, according to Dylan. **"You could say that it gave me a sense of simplicity,"** he said.

Dylan has been a part of the music business for nearly twenty years, but he feels that not too many changes have taken place during his career. **"Everything changes but stays the same,"** he said.

Regarding the popular music of today, Dylan said, **"Some of it is all right."** He cited England's John Clark as his favorite modern songwriter.

What about American artists? Dylan said that Jimi Hendrix was his last favorite contemporary musician from the United States.

Along with concert tours and more records, Dylan said that his future plans include the possibilities of making more movies, writing another movie script, and being involved with television productions.

Although he has progressed well beyond singing for a Hibbing High School Home-coming program, Bob Dylan has not forgotten his home town. **"I am proud to be from Hibbing,"** he concluded.

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As an addendum to the above interview, Pamela Coyle was the subject of the following article which appeared in the *Duluth News-Tribune* in October 1998 at the time of Dylan's concert in the town of his birth. It provides some background to the actual interview which took place 20 years earlier.

FOR AN UNSUSPECTING 17-YEAR-OLD FROM HIBBING,
BOB DYLAN BECAME THE INTERVIEW OF A LIFETIME

Pamela Coyle has interviewed a wide range of famous personalities, from Brooke Shields to Judge Wagner.

But none has brought her as much notoriety – or a greater appreciation of privacy – as an interview with Bob Dylan 20 years ago.

"I was wholly unprepared for the cult of Bob Dylan fans who began to call me after the interview," said Coyle, now a courts reporter for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. In 1978 she was a 17-year-old Hibbing High School senior when she interviewed the reclusive Dylan for the school newspaper.

"People who spent their lives hanging on every word of Bob Dylan starting calling me and asking me what it was like to talk to Bob Dylan," she recalled.

At the time, Coyle knew little about Dylan even though they both grew up in the same Iron Range town. Coyle's favorite musicians were Ted Nugent, Foreigner, Styx and Blue Oyster Cult.

When Dylan's press agent offered an interview to the school newspaper. Coyle figured that, as its editor she had first dibs. She got the only interview in Minnesota before his Oct. 31, 1978 concert in St. Paul.

"We probably spent 20 minutes talking," said Coyle, who went on to earn a journalism degree at the University of Minnesota. "I did not know much about his music and as a journalist today I'm embarrassed that I didn't prepare for the interview. I interviewed him like a 17-year-old. I asked incredibly basic questions. He was very nice, very pleasant. He gave very nice short answers to my questions. It was very much of a novice approach on my part. It wasn't the most free-flowing thing in my career."

But the brief interview with the musician who rarely grants interviews turned Coyle's life upside down.

News media from across the country picked up the story and began to call Coyle. The Associated Press paid her $85 for the story. Newspaper headlines read: Non-fan interviews Dylan.

And Dylan fans began to call her. They called her at school when she was in class. They called at home. They called her parents, David and Margaret Coyle. And they even called her on Saturdays at her job in downtown Hibbing.

"It took on a life of its own," Coyle said of the interview. "They asked me what it was like to talk to him and what he sounded like. The fallout was so overwhelming it supplanted the interview. It was so overwhelming I felt like not being a journalist anymore because I was being hounded so much. It actually ended up giving me a greater appreciation and sensitivity to people on the other end of the telephone and for what they go through."

After the interview, Coyle received two complimentary tickets to Dylan's concert at the St. Paul Civic Center. She and a friend, Sue Hagberg, coincidentally ended up at the same hotel as Dylan. After several unsuccessful attempts to pass a thank-you note to Dylan, Coyle finally got it into the hands of one of Dylan's bodyguards.

She never heard from Dylan again, but she's still hearing from his fans. Like the reclusive musician she interviewed 20 years ago, she'd rather avoid the calls.

"I really don't remember that much about the interview," said Coyle, now 37. "What I recall is what happened after the interview more than anything else. It was really a strange experience to go through for a 17-year-old."

"The experience was pretty simple, but it was a total trip."

3 November 1978
Robert Hilburn interview for *Los Angeles Times*

Source: *Los Angeles Times*, 12 Nov 1978, p. O3

DYLAN ON THE DEFENSE: 'THE '60s ARE OVER'
BY ROBERT HILBURN

KANSAS CITY—For the first time in the 1970s, Bob Dylan isn't being heralded by critics as rock's messiah on his new U.S. tour. He has been rapped in city after city for tampering with the old arrangements and for having too slick a stage manner.

Time magazine called the "mocking show-biz turns" in Dylan's show "tiresome." The *Chicago Sun-Times* termed the concert a "sometimes depressing, sometimes exhilarating, sometimes funny cross between '*Name That Tune*' and '*That's Entertainment!*'"

New Times felt Dylan exhibited the "same kind of breezy conversational style he'd use in glad-handing the high rollers at Tahoe." Perhaps, the writer continued, it was time Dylan considered a graceful retirement or at least a well-deserved rest.

After a decade of unprecedented acclaim, this was an unusual situation for Dylan. The obvious question I posed as we sat in a coffee shop before his show here was: How does it feel?

"They're crazy," he said, of the reviews, between sips of coffee at the counter. **"You'll see the show tonight. You'll see the crowd and how they react. Then, read the paper in the morning and you'll see that whoever reviewed it most likely wasn't there or didn't see the same show—maybe he heard it on the telephone.**

"The writers complain the show's disco or Las Vegas. I don't know how they came up with those theories. We never heard them when we played Australia or Japan or Europe. It's like someone made it up in. one town and the writer in the next town read it. I don't know what the reviewers mean half the time. I don't even care."

There wasn't so much anger as puzzlement in Dylan's combative manner as he spoke. The hostile reviews began this year when the 37-year-old singer-songwriter released his unwieldly, four-hour "*Renaldo & Clara*" movie. They continued with the arrival of the greatly underrated "*Street Legal*" album. Many of the negative notices complained about poor production on the record.

"People now listen to records on stereo sets worth 10 grand," Dylan said. **"It costs them more to listen to the album than it does for people to record it. They listen to how it sounds rather than what it says.**

"And those magazines. They write about the albums from skyscrapers, behind desks. They don't know what is in the hearts and minds of the people any more than they know what I'm thinking or what a subway conductor is thinking.

"It's not me who has turned into something else—it's a lot of those writers. They used to have some kind of rebellious spirit. They don't anymore. In the '60s, they didn't even know if they were reporters. They just wrote. Now, they've got top jobs. They don't listen the same way to the music."

What about the "mocking show-biz turns"? Is the lighter (slightly), more accessible mood meant to satirize other performers?

"I'm not trying to mock anything in this show," he replied. **"We're not equipped to do that. We don't have any props. We're just up there playing my songs. That's all we've ever done.**

"There are so many of these groups that get on stage these days with smoke bombs or people rising up on 12-foot shoes. I'm not into that. That's not my scene.

"I can still relate to a man or woman on stage who is singing a song that is telling me something—something I need to know. If that's not happening on a stage, I've got better things to do than sit in an arena someplace."

At the Kemper Arena that night, Dylan's stage crew played the same Hank Williams tape that it has used before the concert at all other tour stops. Williams, the writer of such country classics as "*Your Cheatin' Heart*" and "*You Win Again*," was one of Dylan's main influences.

Few people in the hall, however, recognized Williams' country-styled vocals. "I think it's Eddy Arnold," said one Dylan fan behind me. The guess wasn't even close. Arnold sings in a country-pop style, while Williams sings in a more traditional country vein. Another fan, however, was close. He thought the singer on the tape was Charley Pride, a current country singer whose style was patterned after Williams'.

In the dressing room at intermission, Dylan was amused at Williams being mistaken for Pride. Dylan, the most influential living American pop figure, has been accused in concert reviews of copying other artists to "catch up with the 70s."

Lighting a cigarette, he was quick to answer the charge: **"I'm not trying to catch up to anything. People said I put a saxophone player in my band because Bruce Springsteen has one. I don't have anybody in my band copying anybody.**

"But, as it turns out, Steve Douglas, who does play saxophone for me in the band, played on all of the Phil Spector records (in the '60s) **and he was with Duane Eddy. Most of those saxophone riffs and runs you hear on other people's records now are coming directly from what Steve Douglas did. He was such a big influence."**

Once reclusive, Dylan has opened up in recent years. That, too, has caused some criticism from reporters who once called him a hermit. When Dylan did numerous interviews to promote his "*Renaldo & Clara*" movie, he was accused of exploiting the press.

But the accessibility has not vanished. It shows in his willingness now to do occasional interviews and in his looser manner on stage. Once prone to vagueness in interviews, he is now quite straightforward. After the concert when he had to walk through the crowd because the tour bus had been parked in the wrong place, Dylan stopped—somewhat shyly—to sign a couple of autographs and shook hands with some of the fans.

"Bob has realized that he is going to be performing for a long time and he's trying to make some adjustments on stage," said one person close to the singer.

Dylan's show has changed somewhat since he kicked off the U.S. tour last summer at the Universal Amphitheater. When he returns Wednesday night to the Inglewood Forum and Friday night to the San Diego Sports Arena, we'll find—if the Kansas City show is any indication—a tighter, more focused presentation.

The Kemper audience, mostly in their late teens and early '20s, gave Dylan six standing ovations. Two of the songs from the new "*Street Legal*" album—a speeded up version of "*Where Are You Tonight*" and "*Changing of the Guards*"—were among the best-received numbers.

During the bus ride back to the hotel, Dylan asked about the crowd reaction. **It's hard to tell,** he said, **from the stage some nights.** Pleased by the report, he added: **"Now, read the papers in the morning and I'll bet you they didn't like it."**

As it turned out, the review in the morning Kansas City Times didn't resolve the bet. The review noted the 'slings and arrows flung' at the singer recently, but didn't offer a firm judgment on Dylan's performance.

One line did reinforce the tour entourage's suspicion of the press: **"The old favorites in Dylan's musical repertoire seemed to stir the crowd most, particularly '*Like a Rolling Stone*' and '*Lay, Lady, Lay*.' Dylan and the band played 27 songs, but "*Lay, Lady, Lay*" wasn't one of them."**

Did the barrage of criticism hurt?

"No," he snapped at first. **"How can you take it seriously? I think they** (the negative reviews) **would hurt if I didn't see the audience response. They know what's going on. In fact, I've got to where I might even like the reviews. They sort of make me an underdog again. I don't like being everybody's favorite.**

"People now think I got nothing but raves in the '60s, but you ought to dig out some of those old papers and you'll see it wasn't true. This is nothing new. The main thing is I believe in these tunes. That's why I'm still doing them.

"I can still get chills sometimes when I'm singing *'It's Alright, Ma'*—the verse that starts, *'You lose yourself, you reappear/You suddenly find you got nothin' to fear... '*

"The reason I'm changing the songs and doing them a new way is to get the power out of them. Every song I do up there means something to me. I'm not there just so people can relive their memories. I'm not out to bring back the '60s. They're over. I'm not nostalgic for those days at all."

2 December 1978
Unidentified Female Interviewer, Municipal Auditorium, Nashville, Tennessee

This interview was conducted at the Municipal Auditorium in Nashville by an unidentified female reporter. The interview tape is circulating among collectors but it is a frustrating 18-minute listen. Dylan's incessant guitar picking/strumming too close to the microphone drowns out the interviewer's soft voice making it nearly impossible, and downright irritating, to attempt to discern her questions. *On the Tracks'* scribe, Cyndi Bentley, spent hours of ear straining effort turning the jumble into a verifiable transcript that we feel is as accurate as possible to the original meaning.

Q: How do you feel about this tour so far?
BD: Well, it's an alright tour. It's been good. You mean the American one, the stateside tour. Ah, I feel good about it.
Q: Despite the reviews, are you going to continue on?
BD: Well, we haven't got bad reviews everywhere. You know, they single out the bad ones. Maybe one in every ten reviews is a real negative one. But that's all. It hasn't been extremely... I mean, extremely bad. If it were extremely bad I wouldn't be selling records and people wouldn't be showing up. So what it comes to is the audiences. They're gonna to know; they'll know if they like it or not. And I've always based my opinion on how I'm doing, on where they are. [He laughs].
Q: So what are you doing after the tour?
BD: We'll probably be touring again. I'll probably be working on some records and we'll go back on the road.
Q: It had read in another interview that you said that the sound you had in *Blonde On Blonde* was like the closest to the sound you hear inside you.
BD: Yeah.
Q: I wondered if you feel that you've heard that in any recent albums or any recent songs?
BD: I tried to do that on the *Street Legal* album but I heard the album on the radio and it doesn't have it, what I thought it did have, sound-wise.
Q: Is that surprising?
BD: Yeah. No... Yeah, it was surprising, but we did that album with a remote truck. And so I didn't find out until much later, after the record was even out, is that what they were getting in the truck, Wasn't what was happening in the room.
Q: How do you feel about that? Is there anything you can do?
BD: There is nothing you can do about it now.
Q: What about when you have something inside you, I mean do you know what it is inside you and you hear it.
BD: Yeah.
Q: What's the process to get it out – like you said this time when you thought this was there, and it wasn't.
BD: It's always a struggle, you know? It wasn't there for a variety of reasons. I hadn't become too familiar with the songs. Sometimes that's the case. I mean I would record a song... years ago I used to do the song live before you ever made a record, so it would evolve. Then I got into just taking the songs into the studio before I was too familiar with them and making the record, and as time went on it would evolve into something else. So I'm gonna try harder next time though to make a more, you know, accessible record.
Q: Do you do any new songs in concert now?

BD: Once in awhile we do some, yeah.
Q: How have they been responded to?
BD: Ah, fine.
Q: Will you be doing any tonight?
BD: We'll probably do one or two, maybe one.
Q: What is your favorite one?
BD: Well, I don't know if I'll record it. But I have a song called "*Baby, Am I Your Stepchild?*"
Q: Is that different from a lot of the songs on *Street Legal*?
BD: No. Umm, content-wise, it's not. It's a more simplified version of, ah, just a man talking to a woman, who is just not treating him properly.
Q: A lot of reviews have said you are more aware of the audience now than you were or let's say maybe you relate more openly to the audience. Do you agree with that?
BD: Well, I always did that. I always did that because I started out in clubs. I think the tour you might be referring to, where people say that – they refer to the last thing you did – they don't... That's the way they figure it's supposed to be. [Laughter] **I've made so many records now, first of all, people should realize that the content of my songs is gonna be within a certain area, but they should also know by now that I'm still reaching for a certain sound, and I'm gonna do anything I can in order to make that sound happen. As far as...** [Very long pause] **I don't know... What was your question?**
Q: About relating to the audience...
BD: As far as that, I think you are referring to the Bob Dylan/Band tour where there were no words spoken during that tour, except maybe a couple of thank you's and whatever, you know? That was an unusual tour. There wasn't much we could do on that tour, except play it. It was a highly acclaimed tour; artistically, I'm not sure what it was all about. I think it had a lot of notoriety because of what had happened before that – in terms of myself and The Band – before they were The Band. But as far as playing anything new, we didn't do any of that. We had a lot of sound problems on that tour also. The energy level was up so high that it was hard to relate to the people in the crowd.
Q: So you don't feel it that way at all then?
BD: About relating to the crowds? No, I'm always related to the crowd on one level or another but this is a show of songs. It's not really a show of too much rapping. I've always kept it there.
Q: One thing I wondered about a lot is, when you are creating, when you finish something, do you ever go through a kind of a cycle where there is an emptiness after you finish something...
BD: Yeah.
Q: ...an empty space... Now do you deal with that? Do you have to just keep working?
BD: Yeah, you just have to keep going beyond it and sooner or later that song, or whatever it is, gets a... See, when you do it all the time – I know myself, I can't speak for any other performer but I'm sure what I have to say is true for a lot of them – is you're never satisfied with what you've done. It's always something ahead of you which is, you know, where you are going, it's not where you have been. It's where you're going that matters and you're always concerned with that because you're always left alone with that, after whatever it is that you created is there out on the street. You know, that's fine but you can't live on your past credentials.
Q: So you think it's a never-ending cycle?
BD: I do. Well, once you set up your mind to be creative in that type of way...
Q: You said Bob Dylan wasn't actually in "*Renaldo and Clara*". I wondered – does that mean that Bob Dylan isn't in the poetry and the music you write?
BD: I am in there. I'm not consciously aware of Bob Dylan being in there. I am in there. It's a fine line between where I am and where I'm projecting and what I know about; what I'm familiar with; what I know to be the truth happening to – could happen to me, it could happen to anybody – what I know about that, whether I tend to make that

personal or not. There really isn't any line. Or if there is a line it's a very fine line on what I tend to make personal of other people's situation. I can easily do that. I do that whenever I feel like it.

Q: As far as like the image that other people have of you, it's like they are interpreting you by what they see. Then are you trying to control what they see?

BD: Well, what they see of me is me, y'see I'm a live performer so that image of me is gonna be pretty... is gonna be pretty... The image they see – what they see is, what they get. Whereas, you go to a movie – the performer might do that take a hundred times. There are a lot of people behind the scenes. And when we are walking down the street, we see many people who give us faces that might not necessarily be what they are thinking. Everybody learns to make a face – if they are sad they put on a happy face. People get conditioned to doing that. With me now, you can't fool crowds night after night and that's the situation I wanna be in because that's the one thing that counts to me is live performing. I'm not interested in being a legend or having an image. All those – they don't give you nothing, you know? You can't go too long on that kind of thing. If I'm in legendary status, that only means I've passed through a lot of different phases... and I've survived it.

Q: Has there been for you a conflict between your inner-self and your outer-self that other people are making you out to be?

BD: No.

Q: Not at all? Before your motorcycle accident – that was related to a very wild period. I remember you said you had to step away to actually see what was happening. Now do you feel like you stay at one with your life, But then you need an existence to have insight, at the same time.

BD: You have to get back every once in a while and go where there isn't anybody, there's just you and yourself. I do that... just step back.

Q: Do you mean that actually physically or do you mean a kind of withdrawal into yourself?

BD: Well, I always was drawn into myself because I'm always thinking about something which you can't see. I might have a song in my head, or I might have something I'm concerned with.

Q: Do you ever feel a danger from ever being too close to yourself?

BD: Yeah, sure. Well, you know, you have to believe that it's coming from another source whatever you are doing. And ah, so when I feel that danger about myself – I'm just not recognizing that's it's not really me who's doing it, it's coming from another source.

Q: Seems like pain and loss seem to be a kind of an emotional status in some of this stuff. Why do you think that is?

BD: Pain and loss? Well, pain and loss are always with us, you know? We tend to believe something, and then we find out it's not true. It's gonna lead to pain and loss.

Q: So how do you deal with the separations in your own life? Everybody has different kinds of separations: from themselves, from people, from their art... Or does that happen to you?

BD: No. No, I don't separate myself from... from... from my music.

Q: You feel that's never a problem for you then...

BD: No.

Q: ...having to reconnect?

BD: To reconnect? You mean, with the inspiration that leads you to create music? No, I'm pretty much always there; walking in the same environment as where my music comes from.

Q: [With a smile in her voice] That must feel good.

BD: Well, there really is no other way, you know. You're either doing it, or you're not doing it.

Q: Why is it that every time you do something new then, you're put down? It seems like everybody wants to put Bob Dylan down.

BD: Well, people like to think that they, ah... [Long pause] **I don't know, why that is. I'm sure it's only true in a certain sense, and it's not true in another sense. As far as music goes, a lot of people have played a lot of different kinds of music.** [Pause] **They put Ray Charles down when he did his country album. It didn't bother him too much.**

Q: Well, it seems like people are like asking me why are you doing the tour? Or they are putting you down. [Nearly indignant] If you make money it's not good, or something.

BD: I don't know.

Q: [She's embarrassed herself now. She giggles and then mumbles.] I don't know.

BD: I don't know. You'll have to ask them...

Q: Do you do anything else besides being involved in music?

BD: No, I don't. Well, I do, but then again I don't. [long pause] **I like to fix things. I like to work with tools.**

Q: Do you ride motorcycles anymore?

BD: I have one. I don't ride it too often.

Q: What about friends? Do you have a lot friends?

BD: Naw, I got a few. I can count 'em on one of my hands.

Q: Do you live in California now? It that your home-base?

BD: Sort of, right now, it is home-base.

Q: Where will you be in the '80s?

BD: [He speaks without hesitation] **In the '80s, I'll be on the road.**

Q: Still? [She giggles, taken back by his humor and directness.] What do you think will happen when no one wants to pay to see Bob Dylan anymore?

BD: I guess, I'll have to play smaller halls. I don't know.

Q: [She again giggles at his devil-may-care attitude.] I have a close friend in Jacksonville who says there's a song of yours for every mood that he could possibly feel. I think that's kind of unique that an artist could span a whole spectrum of emotions.

BD: [Bored] **Yeah.**

Q: How do you feel, right before you go on stage?

BD: Oh, I'm getting used to it.

Q: [Interviewer realizes Dylan's increasingly distracted.] Is it hard to talk now?

BD: Well, now I'm starting to think about some songs... some things I'm gonna do, yeah.

Q: Oh, how long do we have before you "go on"?

BD: About five minutes, I think.

Q: Oh. okay. [She begins to tell him something-it sounds like she's beginning to explain that she could have asked many, many more questions if there'd only been more time – then she shuts off the tape recorder.]

12 December 1978
Lynne Allen Interview, Atlanta, Georgia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 215-223.

Lynne Allen's interview was conducted in the Omni Theatre in Atlanta. It first appeared in *Trouser Press* magazine No. 39 in June 1979 under the heading

INTERVIEW WITH AN ICON
Bob Dylan grants an audience

This does appear in tape form which should be regarded as a rough draft for the published article. Allen is fairly meticulous about using Dylan's quotes, almost ad verbatim and she adds in quotes from elsewhere, the section on Newport for example. She has edited out much of her own contribution to the discussion. On the tape an unidentified male acquaintance of Allen is to be heard asking a few questions of Dylan which are included here by Allen without any acknowledgement of this unknown man.

If I'd thought about it
I never would have done it
I guess I would 'a let it slide
If I'd 'a lived my life by what others were thinkin'
This heart inside me would 'a died
I was just too stubborn to ever be governed by enforced insanity
Someone had to reach for the risin' star
I guess it was up to me

Bob Dylan is a legend in his own time. Not a full-fledged commercial superstar, for he doesn't make platinum records nor sell out all of his live performances, Dylan is merely a legend, enigmatic and mysterious. Familiar, yet strange.

It has been said that Dylan is not half the myth he believes himself to be and that he himself is the myth-monger, selling us his every new phase while, like his descendant in style, David Bowie, he casually discards each old mask with the ease of an actor changing roles. He has also at various times been accused of having sold out, of being too removed, aloof, of not revealing enough, of being cold and calculating, allowing us to see only what he wishes and no more. No matter, in the final analysis he is what he has created.

If the '60s were his formative years, the '70s have seen Dylan subject to many changes in his life. From the laid-back family man of *Nashville Skyline* and *New Morning*, Dylan slowly turned and headed back into the more complex reaches of his mind, starting with *Planet Waves*, which signaled the return within, and following with *Blood On The Tracks*, which brought him even closer to his anima, his muse, who finally appeared to him as *Isis* on *Desire*. (In a dream-scape not unlike Robert Graves' *White Goddess*, who could be found "among pack ice or where the track had faded," Dylan united with his goddess after he "came to the pyramids all imbedded in ice.")

With *Desire* in the stores, Dylan took to the road with his own gypsy troupe. The Rolling Thunder Revue brought to mind the "Indiani Metropolitani", groups of young people who do street theatre in Italy. They toured the U.S. playing moderately sized halls, picking up and

dropping different performers along the way. *Renaldo and Clara*, Dylan's mammoth and controversial movie, was filmed on the road with Rolling Thunder, during a tumultuous period in which his marriage reportedly took a turn for the worse and his life (along with his newly-built dream house) began to slide. Seemingly none the worse for wear and tear, Dylan embarked on the most extensive tour of his career early in 1978. Beginning in Japan, New Zealand and Australia, it finally wound up matters in the southeastern United States in December of last year.

The first time I saw Dylan was in Binghamton, New York, in September 1978. I had always admired him. How could you not? No matter how one views Dylan and/or his music, it's difficult to deny the charismatic mystique that has afforded him widespread recognition and critical acclaim. Personally, I had always responded favorably to whatever courses Dylan had chosen to take, so approaching him live, I was already biased in favor of the man.

I was shocked at his appearance. He seemed ragged and worn (which later proved to be deceptive. Make-up, heavy black around the eyes, cast strange shadows over his face under the lights). The music, though, was even more startling.

My initial reaction was thoroughly negative, to put it mildly. In comparison to what was then currently happening in rock, the music seemed, bluntly, quite lame. The new arrangements seemed clumsy and awkward, overriding the simplicity that had originally made the songs work. But as I listened closer it rang with a clear resonance. The sound in the hall was exceptional, and the musicians excellent.

This was certainly not, as many reviews and reviewers had suggested, "Las Vegas" nor was it disco. It was just Dylan, older, to be sure, scraggly and unkempt as always, even in his new black and white stage suit, his band playing behind him like a mini-orchestra in perfect synch.

I met Dylan a week later, at a typical record company bash held for him and his band after one of the Madison Square Garden shows. A friend introduced me to him and, sitting at an adjacent table, I had ample opportunity to observe him at close quarters. I sensed no animosity from him, no aggression nor defense; indeed, he seemed rather shy.

His expertise at deterring conversation from himself, at keeping the talk light and meaningless, was obvious. He chain smoked and drank red wine all night. He appeared drunk at times, slurring words and laughing a lot, but it could easily have been an act, a way of retaining his one-upmanship in any situation. Dylan, the enigmatic cynic, the infallible put-on artist remained in control.

Three months later, I caught up with the Bob Dylan tour once again, this time, down south in Birmingham, Alabama. Looking disheveled as ever, the Jack of Hearts had once again trumped those in his audience who had been led to believe press reports of his new "slick" image. The tour had almost reached its end and the band was much tighter than they had been earlier. The songs no longer felt stiff, they were flowing now, having settled into their new forms. Dylan spoke to the crowd a lot that night, introducing songs with brief stories or parables, breathing new life into songs 10, even 15 years old. He ended the show with 'Forever Young, ' which he dedicated to one of his children. **"This is our last – look for us,"** he said, **"We may be back. I'm not quite ready to be put out to pasture just yet!"**

On the way out of town, I left a note for Dylan with the desk clerk of his hotel, saying that I wished to interview him, that I had no ulterior motive at all other than an interest and a desire to talk. I left a number for him to call and headed back home to Atlanta.

A week later, backstage at the Omni in Atlanta, an hour before going onstage, Bob Dylan sat alone in his dressing room, strumming an old Martin guitar that had yellowed with age, the wood around the pick-guard chipped from years of use. Dressed in a green flannel shirt, black leather pants and boots, his eyes hidden behind dark aviator shades, he was relaxed and friendly, the antithesis of the guarded creature which the media so often portrays him as.

His old black leather jacket lay crumpled up on one of the chairs, a small notebook peeked out of one of the pockets. What appeared to be chicken scratchings made their way across the open page. **"I'm always writing something"** he explained as he continued to pick a haunting blues melody on the guitar.

I mentioned to him that I had noticed a definite theme running through his more recent albums, culminating on *Desire*. He didn't seem too happy with the idea, though, and emphasized his disagreement with a forceful strum. **"That album didn't have a concept. It didn't have that type of concept. Of course I wrote it with somebody else too, but I always kept it kinda on the track of where I thought it should be going. I can look back on it just like anybody else... but when that particular album was happening, I didn't know what was happening at the time. We tried it with a lot of different people in the studio, a lot of different types of sound and I even had back-up singers on that album for two or three days, a lot of percussion, a lot going on. But as it got down, I got more irritated with all this sound going on and eventually just settled on bass, drums and violin."**

"That was new," he stressed. **"I didn't take that out as far as I wanted to, I didn't have a chance to do that. I wanted to do more harmonica and violin together but we never got a chance to do that. But, yeah, all that time, those songs like Isis and all that – gee, I haven't done that for a long time – I used to do that song all the time..."**

Desire, Dylan's collaboration with writer Jacques Levy was a deeply mystical statement, the violin capturing the free, gypsy spirit so inherent in the songs and later in the whole Rolling Thunder idea. **"Yeah, it was that. It definitely was that. Oh you know, we did it all night long, into the morning. I never slept when I made that album, I couldn't sleep. I would have to listen to it again to really answer these questions in a coherent way."**

"You've left it behind in a way," I said.

"No, I haven't left the songs behind. I never leave the songs behind. I might leave the arrangements and the mood behind, but the songs, I never leave them behind."

At Newport in 1965, he unleashed his new-found electricity on an unsuspecting audience. Or as he put it in Atlanta, when introducing *Maggie's Farm*: **"I was invited to Newport in 1965. I had been invited there before and never caused too much fuss, but I was invited in '65 and I went and I played this particular song. Anyway, people booted me out of town, actually, for playing this particular tune and it was hard to believe that this song caused such a disturbance, but it did! It's called *I Ain't Gonna Work on Maggie's Farm No More*."**

Years later, after a seemingly endless flow of changes in direction, he is still meeting with the same type of criticism. Dylan steps in and out of musical forms these days with an unusual ease, echoes of carnival music blend harmoniously with primitive jungle rhythms and Chicago blues, while Dylan the Folksinger and Dylan the Newport Electric Poet still exist. As at Newport, Dylan has not met with much favorable response to his new sound. People are disturbed by the strange changes. The unfamiliarity.

He refuses to stagnate, to be pinned down, categorized: **"Art is the perpetual motion of illusion,"** he once observed. And he truly lives his belief.

I mentioned a line from *Idiot Wind*: "Your chestnut mare shoots through my head and is making me see stars!" (Dylanologist A.J. Weberman claims that equine references in Dylan songs refer to heroin.) Interestingly, *Idiot Wind* was written before Dylan's teaming with Jacques Levy, co-writer (with Roger McGuinn) of *Chestnut Mare* years earlier.

"That's right! Yeah!" He laughed delightfully. **"I'm sure it's all connected up y'know, way down the line."**

"But yeah, I had a couple of years there, where I went out to be by myself quite a bit of the time, and that's where I experienced those kind of songs, on the *Blood On The Tracks* album... I'll do anything to write a song..." he laughed. **"I used to anyway".**

Street Legal seems to backtrack through all the aforementioned albums. It is an acknowledgement of changes, both internal and external.

"You're right. Let's say with a song like *True Love Tends to Forget*..." He lit a cigarette. **"The mood I was in on that song is I mean, that means a lot, if you think about it, y'know. *True love tends to forget* it isn't like a possession trip, when you've been wronged, that type of thing – I was trying to get the most out of that. I thought that was my best album."**

I agreed.

"I hear it sometimes on the radio or a record player and I see that it's badly mixed and it doesn't sound very good, but what can you do? I've got, on Columbia Records alone, 21 or 22 albums out. So every time you make an album, you want it to be new, good and different, but personally, when you look back on them for me all my albums are, are just measuring points for wherever I was at a certain period of time. I went into the studio, recorded the songs as good as I could, and left. Basically, realistically, I'm a live performer and want to play onstage for the people and not make records that may sound really good."

I mentioned how the current show had changed each time that I had seen him, and how much tighter the band had become as the tour progressed.

"Yeah, well it's never gonna be the same two nights in a row." Dylan has made many comments in the press recently about the 1980s. In his *Rolling Stone* interview with Jonathan Cott he said, **"Anyone who's going to be doing anything will have his or her cards showing. You won't be able to get back in the '80s."**

What did he mean by that?

"I don't know what I meant by that," he chuckled. **"Me and Jonathan, every time he does an interview, we just get drunk. I don't think you should show all of your cards all of the time, I didn't mean that."**

He continued: **"It's like, when I started out playing – it's hard to put into words – I don't know what the eighties are going to be like. I imagine a lot of the glue is gonna hold a lot of things together which are sort of scattered now. Appearances of people you know, some wearing blue uniforms with badges, they are probably going to be standing side by side with housewives with their hair up in curlers, wanting the same things. All these different elements**

are going to I think be molded together. I think people are going to be more honest in the '80s."

Like the '60s, I wondered?

"No, never. I don't think so." He answered adamantly.

Dylan remembers the '60s very well. They were years that shaped him, that produced the inspiration for him to create some of the most potent art of the decade. His strange song-poems mirrored the turbulence and chaos of the times. He spoke for an entire generation, it seemed, and then suddenly he wanted no involvement with the movement he had given voice to.

Some say it was the motorcycle accident. That it almost killed him, sent him crashing headlong into a nightmare of his own making. Others just say that he fell in love, settled into a more even existence in which politics and protest had no part. Radical critics like Weberman flatly accuse him of "drifting into indifference during a period when resistance was called for."

"I was always more tied up with the Beat Movement," he admits. **"I don't know what the hippie movement was all about, that was a media thing, I think, 'Rent a Hippie' I don't know what that was about. A lot of people, people that I knew, were in the early '60s up 'til '65 or '66. There was a different comradeship. There was drugs, but drugs were something that was just a playful thing or something which wasn't that romanticized. Drugs were always in the folk clubs and in the jazz clubs, but outside of those places I never really saw too many drugs."**

"The drugs at the end of the '60s were artificial. They were those.... ah... L.S... acid, all that stuff made in a laboratory. Well I guess it's all made in a laboratory one way or another. I don't know. I was never involved in the acid scene either."

By 1968 the Beatles had released *Sgt. Pepper*. Rock and roll had moved primarily into studios and electronics began to become more and more a part of the music. Acid rock flourished on the West Coast and the new art form was just becoming self-consciously aware of itself with a little help from its friends (often in the form of a little Kool-Aid). Dylan chose this time to put out the album he had been working on since the cataclysmic accident. *John Wesley Harding* totally contradicted everything happening musically at the time. The deceptively simple folk melodies only served to draw one's attention even closer to the intensity of the lyrical message.

Eventually, the '60s came to a close, the Beatles broke up, the war ended in a stale-mate and we stumbled into the '70s in a catatonic daze. The music reflected the times. Rock had a few casualties of its own. Madison Avenue and Wall Street moved in as the voice of the people turned into a multibillion dollar industry. A few couldn't handle it, and destroyed themselves by becoming victims of their own myths. Others, like Jagger and Dylan, survived.

"People are always talking about the '60s and now we are almost into the '80s and everybody wants to know what happened back then. Well," he answered himself, **"in the '60s, everything that happened you did because you wanted to. You didn't do it because you thought you should do it or because it was the thing to do. Something inside of you told you you wanted to do it. There was a network all across the country, really. Very small, but very close, I still see those people traveling around y'know, they're still hanging in there. But as far as what happened, it will always be felt just the same as the Civil War was always felt into 1870 and 1880. It was just something which was felt by everyone whether they knew it or not and a lot of people in the '60s started all this which is happening now. They just don't realize it, you know."**

He put down the guitar, lit another cigarette. **"But the '50s gave birth to the '60s too, don't forget, and in the '50s it was even rarer... like in the '60s it was people caught up on all the be-bop and the beat movement, or the subterranean culture that was going on, but it was home-like and it gave you identity."**

It is interesting that Dylan's material has always dealt with the opposing forces of black and white, whether on a material level, as during the '60s when songs like *The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll* clarified the issues of the civil rights movement, or on the spiritual level of his most recent work. Dylan has taken to wearing black and white on stage of late, costuming his entire band in the same. The effect is one of total balance. Yin and yang, darkness and light.

"Well, I think I'm more of an extremist. But no, I'm more active than someone who is balancing," he said. **"If you play the game all by yourself and you're the only one playing the game, then you want to balance the game, but if you're playing the game with someone else, you've got to ride up when it's time for someone else to ride down."**

Like a see saw?

"Yeah right, and then you get the same kind of balance, but if you're playing by yourself then you've got to move to the middle."

Which you don't do.

"No, I'm uncomfortable in the middle, too easily blown down."

When questioned about his unusual relationship with his record company, of being able to release any product he wants, he became edgy, his answer accompanied once again by the guitar. [As I am writing this, Bob Dylan is in the process of forming his own record company, *Accomplice*, to be distributed by CBS.]

"CBS doesn't pay me, except for a royalty rate. They don't support these tours for me so they don't have any say. It they supported them, maybe they'd have some say in it."

With *Renaldo and Clara*, Dylan took a new approach by filming the characters of his dreams. The film was an unconstructed, symbolic comment, a bold and original epic (its original four-hour length was the major complaint from most of its critics), visually combining the same elements Dylan uses in the written word. The actors and actresses, real people from his life, cast in fantasy roles.

American film critics on the whole were not impressed with Dylan's work. They accused him of over-indulgence and blamed his "careless treatment" of people close to him for the break-up of his marriage, which followed shortly on the heels of the film's release. The *Village Voice* sent an entire battalion of reviewers to see it and they all came back with negative impressions.

However, the film was hailed at last year's Cannes Film Festival as one of the most innovative presentations there, an honor bestowed on Dylan by Europe's most discriminating cinema elite, which must have more than made up for the confused and confusing reviews it received in the US.

Filmed by Sam Shepard, Dylan claims *Renaldo* was 10 years in the works but has decided that, **"For me, film wouldn't be the right thing to do right now. It's not live enough. You're acting for a camera, a director, you can't really see the results."**

Renaldo and Clara seemed to be spontaneous.

"That was great! Yeah, but I can't do that no more. It costs too much money for one, to make your own movie, and then if you make a movie for another man who's putting up the money, then he'll want what he wants."

As the '50s gave way to the '60s, the age of the media superstar was born. James Dean gave way to Elvis Presley who gave way to Bob Dylan, each gigantic myths in their own time. While Elvis found his way into Middle America's heart, the chasm James Dean left wasn't filled until Bob Dylan formed a new link in the ever-growing chain of super-anti-heroes.

When compared to the people he once strived to be like, he denies all similarity of public persona.

"It's not as heavy as it probably was to deal with being Elvis Presley. Elvis didn't write any of his songs don't forget, I write all this stuff so I know what I'm saying. I'm behind it so I don't feel like I'm a mystery or anything."

Does he consider himself an artist as opposed to a musician or a songwriter?

"Well yeah, it's like all the artists have had their periods right, and that they've changed. Most people in history that have done anything at all have always been put down. So it don't bother me a bit. I don't care what people say. Whether I'm an artist, or a musician, or a poet, or a songwriter or just anything..."

7 December 1979
Bruce Heiman Interview, Hollywood, CA

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 225-227.

On December 7th, the day before the first of Dylan's two shows in Tucson, Bob was interviewed over the telephone by DJ Bruce Heiman for KMEX, the local Tucson radio station. The subject matter is limited to Dylan's opinion of the activities and views of the American Atheists Association. Dylan, at the time, was in Hollywood. Taken from the circulating tape.

BH: OK. My name is Bruce Heiman. I'm with KMEX radio here in Tucson. OK. We got a press release from the Tucson chapter of the American Atheists and they said in response to your recent embrace of the born-again Christian movement, they plan to leaflet your upcoming concert. They say, recognizing the need to inform those in attendance that the new Dylan cause-celebre is a repressive and reactionary ideology, local members intend to attract attention to the contradictions between the previous content of your art form and the message which your songs now expound.

BD: Uh huh. I still don't quite grasp what you're saying or who's saying it or...

BH: OK. It's the American Atheists here in Tucson.

BD: Is this a group?

BH: Yeah, actually. The American Atheists is a worldwide group headed by Madeleine Mary O'Hara, and they have a chapter here in Tucson, and I think basically what they are talking about is your stand in the past and the type of music you played with the message you tried to get across and the music you're playing today and the different message you're trying to get across.

BD: Yeah, well, whatever the old message was the Bible says, "All things become new, old things are passed away." I guess this group doesn't believe that. What is it exactly that they're protesting?

BH: Well, I think what they're against... there's another statement that they make. It says...

BD: Are they against the doctrine of Jesus Christ, or that he died on the cross or that man was born into sin? Just what exactly are they protesting?

BH: Well the Atheists are against any sort of religion, be it Christianity...

BD: Well, Christ is no religion. We're not talking about religion... Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life.

BH: There's another statement they made that maybe you could shed some light on. They said they would like to remind Dylan fans and audiences that one's right to say something does not per se lend any validity to the statement. So, in essence, what they're saying is that you have followers who are going to be at the concert and are going to listen to the message of your music.

BD: Right. I follow God, so if my followers are following me, indirectly they're gonna be following God too because I don't sing any song which hasn't been given to me by the Lord to sing.

BH: OK. So I think that was one thing that they were concerned about. Do you have any idea what they mean... see, they believe that all religion is repressive and reactionary.

BD: Well, religion is repressive to a certain degree. Religion is another form of bondage which man invents to get himself to God. But that's why Christ came. Christ didn't preach religion. He preached the truth, the way and the life. He said He'd come to give life and life more abundantly. He is talking about life, not necessarily religion...

BH: They say that your songs now expound passive acceptance of one's fate. Do you agree with that? I'm not exactly sure what they mean by that.

BD: I'm not exactly sure what they mean by that either. But I don't feel that that is true. But I'm not quite sure what that means – "passive resistance to mans' fate". What is mans' fate?

BH: I don't know. These aren't my ideologies. These are just a group of Atheists.

BD: Well, this ideology isn't my ideology either. My ideology now would be coming out of the scripture. You see, I didn't invent these things. These things have just been shown to me and I'll stand on that faith, that they are true. I believe they're true. I know they're true.

BH: Do you feel that the message of your music has changed over the years from music which talked about war to music that now talks about Christianity?

BD: No. There's gonna be war. There's always war and rumors of war. And the Bible talks about a war coming up which will be a war to end all wars...

Discontinuity in tape.

BD: ...The spirit of the atheist will not prevail. I can tell you that much. It's a deceiving spirit.

BH: Why do you maintain that it won't prevail?

BD: Is it anti-God? Is an atheist anti-God?

BH: Yes. I'm trying to think... I interviewed Madeleine Mary O'Hara a couple of weeks ago and she said that it is anti-religion, anti-God. I think that she was saying that anyone who believes in a supreme being is, to use her word, is stupid. So they are against anything to do with religion.

BD: Uh-huh!

BH: Sometimes it's hard for me to grasp exactly what they are saying.

BD: Well a religion which says you have to do certain things to get to God – they're probably talking about that type of religion, which is a religion which is by works: you can enter into the Kingdom by what you do, what you wear, what you say, how many times a day you may pray, how many good deeds you may do. If that's what they mean by religion, well that type of religion will not get you into the Kingdom, that's true. However, there is a master creator, a supreme being in the universe.

BH: Alright. Now, in another one of their statements they say that: "For years Dylan cried out against the *Masters of War* and the power elite. The new Dylan now proclaims that we must serve a new master, a master whose nebulous origins were ignorance, foolishness, stupidity and blind faith. The Dylan who inspired us to look beyond banal textbooks and accepted ideologies now implores us to turn inward to the pages of the Holy Bible, a book filled with contradictions, inaccuracies, outrages and absurdities." Now this is what they are saying.

BD: Well, the Bible says "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God..."

BH: OK. They're saying I think, in essence, the movement is a fraud and evasion...

BD: Well, I don't know that movement. Which movement are they talking about? The Atheist movement?

BH: No, the Jesus movement.

BD: Oh! Well, it isn't a fraud. There's nothing fraudulent about it. It's all true. It always has been true. It is true and it will be true.

BH: They're calling upon your admirers, the people who support you, who will attend your concert, to go on and appreciate your art form but to avoid the psychological and social pitfalls – this is their words – or being victimized by your new-found religionist fantasy.

BD: Well, they can't do that. They should know about fantasy more than I. But, they can't do that. You can't separate the words from the music. I know people try to do that. But, they can't do that. It's like separating the foot from the knee.

BH: You're saying that it's all one.

BD: It is all one.

BH: OK, Bob. I appreciate your time, I really do.

April 1980
Bob Dylan's letter to Steve

Source: *ISIS* #126, p. 23

This single page letter, which is being sold at auction by "R&R Enterprises" (June, 2006), is accompanied by the original envelope, addressed in Dylan's hand to "Steve". The letter was written by Dylan while he was on tour in Toronto, Canada and although it is not dated, we must assume that the letter dates from April 1980, when Dylan was playing four nights at the Massey Hall, Toronto.

Dear Steve –

We are up in Toronto singing and playing for about 3000 people a night in a downtown theatre – The Spirit of the Lord is calling people here in their beautiful and clean city but they are more interested in lining up for Apocalypse Now than to be baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost –

Wanna thank you for that Bible as it is helpful in discovering a few phrases from and shedding more light on what the King James version reads –

God will lift up your heart as you begin to realize that 'He thru Christ has reconsiled [sic] **man unto Himself (II Corinthians). You are in basic training and boot camp and I thank God you are and your commitment runs deep and you will be used to minister and break the hold of darkness in those you become face to face with – "Study to show thyself approval"**

You will be strong in the Lord and seeing that looks are deceiving, you will work miracles that way – He has called you to be a saint and your responsibility is to him and him alone –

Be praying and not looking back no more – press on toward what is ahead – I send love to you and will pray for strength and more strength for ya – Always In the name of Jesus Christ Son of God, Manifest in the flesh

Bob Dylan

16 May 1980
Pat Crosby Interview, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, p. 229.

This interview was conducted at the Hilton Hotel in Pittsburgh on May 15 1980 prior to the concert at the Pittsburgh Stanley Theater and broadcast on KDKA TV the same day. This taped interview lasts just 3 minutes. There is rumor of a 20 minute tape and possibly video but this is not circulating. The interview section comes after comments by irate fans protesting about Dylan's performance.

PC: How and why did Bob Dylan recently stop singing the older songs and start singing gospel and about the Lord? He said he would talk to us about it...

BD: I can understand why they feel rebellious about it because up until the time the Lord came into my life, I knew nothing about religion; I was just rebellious and didn't think much about it either way. I never did care much for preachers who just ask for donations all the time and talk about the world to come. I was always growing up with "it's right here and now" and until Jesus became real to me that way, I couldn't understand it.

PC: So can you understand people's reaction to you when you come on stage and start singing about Jesus and they want the old stuff?

BD: Oh, yeah, that's right, they want the old stuff. But the old stuffs not going to save them and I'm not going to save them. Neither is anybody else they follow. They can boogie all night, but it's not gonna work.

PC: Do you still hold the same enthusiasm for the older material or is it gone?

BD: Oh, yeah, I love that stuff. I look at it now and I hear it and it amazes me that it was me that even wrote it or performed it.

PC: It was Bob Dylan who sang many years ago that "the times are changing". It is clear that those words are still true.

21 May 1980
Karen Hughes Interview, Dayton, Ohio

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 869-871.

Karen Hughes, the young Australian journalist (see her earlier 1978 interview in Volume 3) conducted this session which was the first formal interview after Bob's conversion. Her article was printed in the New Zealand newspapers *The Star* on 10 July 1980 and The Dominion on August 2 1980. It was also reprinted in *Occasionally* 4.

Bob Dylan stretched out his hand and reached for a cigarette from a half-empty pack on the table. **"It would have been easier,"** he sighed **"If I had become a Buddhist, or a Scientologist or if I had gone to Sing Sing."**

I asked him if many of his friends had forsaken him.

"No REAL friends?" Dylan responded tellingly, blowing cigarette smoke away from my face, in the tiny hotel room in Dayton, Ohio, where we talked as his tour was cutting across America's Bible belt and winding it's way back to Los Angeles, Dylan's home of nine years.

"At every point in my life I've had to make decisions for what I believed in. Sometimes I've ended up hurting people that I've loved. Other times I've ended up loving people that I never thought I would."

"You ask me about myself," Dylan said at the end of an intensive session of questioning, **"but I'm becoming less and less defined as Christ becomes more and more defined."**

"Christianity," he explained, **"is not Christ and Christ is not Christianity. Christianity is making Christ the Lord of your life. You're talking about your life now, you're not talking about just part of it, you're not talking about a certain hour every day. You're talking about making Christ the Lord and the Master of your life, the King of your life. And you're also talking about Christ, the resurrected Christ, you're not talking about some dead man who had a bunch of good ideas and was nailed to a tree. Who died with those ideas. You're talking about a resurrected Christ who is Lord of your life. We're talking about that type of Christianity."**

"It's HIM through YOU. 'He's alive', Paul said, 'I've been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I but Christ who liveth in me'. See Christ is not some kind of figure down the road. We serve the living God, not dead monuments, dead ideas, dead philosophies. If he had been a dead God, you'd be carrying around a corpse inside you."

Dylan speaks of having constant dialogue with Christ, of surrendering his life to God's will much in the same way as Joan of Arc or St Francis of Assisi would have done. It is, he says, the only thing that matters. When you ask about his band, he replies **"I think Jim Keltner and Tim Drummond are the best rhythm section that God ever invented."**

His view on American politics is, **"God will stay with America as long as America stays with God. A lot of people maybe even the President, maybe a lot of senators, you hear them speak and they'll speak of the attributes of God. But none of them are speaking about being a disciple of Christ."**

"There's a difference between knowing who Christ is and being a disciple of Christ and recognizing Christ as a personality and being of God. I'm more aware of that than anything and it dictates my very being. So I wouldn't have much to offer anybody who wants to know about politics or history or art or any of that. I've always been pretty extreme in all them areas anyway."

Whether on or off the road Dylan worships whenever he can at the Assembly of God, a fundamentalist, pentecostal, evangelical denomination that believe in the literal Bible and speaking in tongues. He came to Christ through a revelation, a personal experience with Jesus.

"Jesus put his hand on me. It was a physical thing. I felt it. I felt it all over me. I felt my whole body tremble. The glory of the Lord knocked me down and picked me up."

"Being born again is a hard thing. You ever seen a mother give birth to a child? Well it's painful. We don't like to lose those old attitudes and hang-ups. Conversion takes time because you have to learn to crawl before you can walk. You have to learn to drink milk before you can eat meat. You're re-born, but like a baby. A baby doesn't know anything about this world and that's what it's like when you're reborn. You're a stranger. You have to learn all over again. God will show you what you need to know."

"I guess He's always been calling me," Dylan said gently. **"Of course, how would I have ever known that? That it was Jesus calling me. I always thought it was some voice that would be more identifiable. But Christ is calling everybody; we just turn him off. We just don't want to hear. We think he's gonna make our lives miserable, you know what I mean. We think he's gonna make us do things we don't want to do. Or keep us from doing things we want to do."**

"But God's got his own purpose and time for everything. He knew when I would respond to His call."

18 November 1980
Paul Vincent Interview, San Francisco

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 705-710

This interview took place backstage at the Fox Warfield Theatre, San Francisco on November 18th 1980. It was broadcast the following day on KMEL Radio, with a number of Dylan songs interspersed in the interview. The following is taken directly from the original interview tape rather than the radio broadcast.

PV: Over the past eighteen years or so you've been written about and analysed and criticised and second-guessed and worshipped and idolised by many. There was that fellow back in Greenwich Village who went through your garbage. As time goes on does it ever get easier being Bob Dylan?

BD: (Laughs) **Well it's easy being Bob Dylan, it's just being, you know, trying to live up to what people would want Bob Dylan to do that might be difficult, but, uh, it's not really that difficult.**

PV: More than once you've been referred to as a legend. I mean you're aware of that fact, whatever that word may mean. Is it difficult living up to those expectations? Is it something you've learned to live with, or is it a burden sometimes?

BD: Well, uh, the things I've done in the past which would lead up to that – some of those things I do – i still do. Some things I don't do. So, uh, as long as I keep it straight in my mind who I am and not get that confused with who I'm supposed to be, I think it'll be alright.

PV: You've said in the past that the songs are already there. I think Woody Guthrie may have said that too, and that your job was to put them down on paper. Is that to say that writing your songs comes easily?

BD: Yeah, the best ones come real easy.

PV: Do you ever find yourself pondering the phrasing of a line for an hour or so?

BD: Hm. Hmmm.

PV: There's been hundreds of analyses of your songs over the years, you're aware of that. Do any of your songs mean something totally different now than may be they did when you wrote them originally, or does the meaning remain just...

BD: The meaning stays the same. They don't change, uh, they change, you know, some bring out certain parts of 'em that may be not so evident years ago, as may be more evident to me now, but uh, they don't change.

PV: Last night for example on Simple Twist Of Fate you did some different lyrics in there. If you change lyrics in songs is it spontaneous or is it planned out?

BD: Uh, let me see. That particular song was recorded, I think, two times, and one time it had one set of lyrics, and another had another set of lyrics, but the difference in lyrics wasn't that, uh, you know, detrimental to the meaning of the song, on that particular song. I may sing some one night and another night depending what's in my – comes to my mind at the time.

PV: But the gist of the song is exactly the same. There's about even people try to pick apart your lyrics and try to... Should they be satisfied with it meaning to them whatever they would like it to mean to them as opposed to what it is you mean?

BD: Yeah, I think so. I think some place there's a, um, road there that what I expect... what I intend it to mean – and what they think it means – probably means something in the middle there... somethin'. Something they know... part of both.

PV: Doing the older songs that you do, do they mean something different in 1980? Does *Blowin' In The Wind* mean something different in 1980 than it meant in 1962?

BD: No. It's no different. I think it means the same thing.

PV: Your career's been marked by many changes. How much do you concern yourself about how quickly people will accept your changes?

BD: (Pause) **Well, you just hope for the best, you know, you just hope people will come and see you and if they don't come see you then I guess it's time to stop.**

PV: Some critics have not been kind as a result of the past two albums because of the religious content. Does that surprise you?

BD: Well...

PV: For example, they've said, some have said, that you're proselytising. Is Jesus Christ the answer for all of us in your mind?

BD: Yeah, uh, it's... I would say that, uh-huh. In order to, you know, what we're talking about is the nature of God and, uh, I think you have to... in order to go to God... have to, uh, go through Jesus, yeah. You have to understand that. You have to have an experience with that.

PV: Would you like to have us come away from your shows hopefully thinking more deeply in that direction?

BD: Oh, well, I don't know. You know, I don't give in to what people feel as they leave the shows. Uh, uh.

PV: You're not preaching to us?

BD: No, no I'm not... I'm not... I'm not (pause) **I could do a little bit of this and a little bit of that but right now I'm just content to play these shows. I don't have, uh... this is a stage show we're doing, it's not, uh, a salvation ceremony.**

PV: I first saw you on the Les Crane Show. It must have been back in, oh, must have been 1964 or so. You did *Baby Blue* and *It's Alright, Ma*. Since then you've only done TV a couple of times: Johnny Cash, the John Hammond PBS tribute and one other. Do you have any interest in being exposed on the tube at all?

BD: Uh, no, I really don't (laughing)**. I don't like... really, it seems funny for me to say, I don't really care for the bright lights that much.**

PV: As far as interviews too, you haven't done that many interviews over the years. Is there a reason for that necessarily?

BD: No. No particular reason.

PV: Pennebaker's film, cinema verite documentary of kind of a day in the life of Bob Dylan called *Dont Look Back* is a great film, I think, and it's very seldom shown. Do you have any rights to that film at all?

BD: I don't know what the situation with that film is, you know.

PV: Because I know it was shown once at a Pennebaker film festival and, other than that first run back in whatever year it came out, you know, since then it hasn't been shown much at all.

BD: I don't know much about that.

PV: When you listen to current music are you influenced at all by what you hear? Do current trends concern you at all?

BD: Yeah, uh, current trends (pause) **not so much. There're song-writers that I admire, you know, but, uh...**

PV: You've always done your own thing. Back when the Beatles did *Sergeant Pepper* and the Stones did *Satanic Majesties* you came out with *John Wesley Harding* which was in totally... against the grain of the psychedelic...

BD: I wasn't going in that direction of that type of, uh, never was. I tried to keep my music simple.

PV: Your albums are a little more produced these days than they used to be.

BD: (Laughs) **If that's what you call it.**

PV: Do you still use the same recording techniques?

BD: Oh, I'd say over the course of a year – maybe a period of, uh, six days in the studio. That's probably it. (Laughs). **If I can't make a record in six days I don't...**

PV: That's the way it's always been too, basically?

BD: Hmmmmm.

PV: How involved do you get personally with the day-to-day business activities of your records and concerts?

BD: Uh – not too much. Not too deep.

PV; Are you aware of radio stations and whether they're playing...

BD: I listen to the radio, of course, you know, but, uh, sometime, and try to pick up different stations in different towns.

PV: We heard that you heard a cut from *Saved* on a Minnesota radio station and didn't...

BD: (Laughs) **A St. Paul radio station...**

PV: ...and didn't care for the mix and wanted to...

BD: ...just left it there. The mix... it was mixed wrong or something, I don't know, it didn't sound right to me anyway, so I... I don't know. I must've told somebody at that time who was, uh, working on the album. I know I didn't really say anything to the record company about it. But some people tell me that they saw it in the press that I'd said something about it, but I don't really recall – really making too much of a fuss over it.

PV: You realise that almost anything you say will be made a fuss over because you're saying it.

BD: If you say it to the right people it will, yeah.

PV: Would you like to have a hit single on top 40 radio?

BD: (Laughs) **Yeah, sure.**

PV: Why not, right?

BD: (Laughs) **Yeah.**

PV: Did... when writing your songs does that enter your mind at all, or is it just an interesting by-product?

BD: No, I don't (pause) **I don't really know what sells and what... Well, of course, we all do know what sells and what doesn't sell – what you need to make a hit record. I think most people in the business know that. But, uh, I don't usually think of just that being the end result because, uh, I really keep my songs and make 'em happen so they last a while, rather than just be a hit record and gone.**

PV: Your sets vary from night to night. How planned are your sets?

BD: They're not very well planned. Uh. (laughs)

PV: For example, I understand you did *We Just Disagree*, you've done *Abraham, Martin and John*...

BD: Yeah, well, we try stuff out to see what, you know, what feels right and what doesn't. We just... it's just trial and experiment.

PV: When you did *Abraham, Martin and John* on opening night you and Clydie, I believe, sat at the piano and on the line "has anybody here seen your old friend Bobby, do you wonder where he's gone" the crowd reacted. Could they have been thinking in this case, rather than Bobby Kennedy, could they have been thinking about "where has our old Bobby Dylan gone"?

BD: Sure, they could have, because, you know, they could think any Bobby. They don't necessarily have to relate it to me. They... It's just a name. Uh, yeah, I'm sure some people think... When I first heard that song I didn't really know who the Bobby was in it. I can't remember whether... I didn't put that together for a while. I put together the rest of the names but, uh, for some reason I... Kind of a slow one that for me.

PV: Just digressing for a moment – going back to your Budokan tour – that was a different feel, different look for you too as far as the way you dressed on stage and the way you did the songs. In fact, I remember when you did it here at the Oakland Coliseum you made the statement "you've been reading that this tour is showbizzy and disco but we know better than that". In a way I thought that you were maybe goofing on a bunch of us or maybe on the world with that tour.

BD: No, they always say something that's reported in the newspaper, I don't know who does it but it's always misinterpreted in some way, like the last show we had out was some kind of... it was like a "gospel show". Well it was because, uh, most, uh, most of my stuff, yeah, all my stuff at that time was influenced or written right off the Gospel but, uh, that was no reason to say it wasn't a musical show. And for some people, you know, they... they just went on one side and they forgot to say that it was also... it also had different aspects of it rather than just a... preachin' from the Bible which, uh, you know, a lotta people may read something like that and say "wow, you know, wow, I can read my own Bible I don't have to get it preached at me, you know". That's when they decide not to come. There's also a lot of people just turned of by the Bible, which is a case nowadays too.

PV: Maybe it could be something as simple as people knowing and loving your older songs so much and they mean so much to them that they so much wanted to hear them...

BD: Yeah, that's true. But don't forget now, people say a lot of stuff they don't mean and there's different reasons for saying this and different reasons for saying that. You may say one thing in a certain predicament and you find yourself in another predicament. You may find yourself saying, you know, the totally opposite thing. So when I hear that, oh yeh, people, they expected me to sing the old songs – well I was singing those old songs – we did a tour for it must've been, you know, nine months, singing them all over the world and, uh, there was a lot of complaints about that. I mean, I was just.. that tour... that had more complaints than, uh, than the last tour we did because people said, "well, you know, he doesn't sound like he used to sound and their arrangements are disco and they're slick" well that wasn't necessarily true. That wasn't disco, it wasn't slick and people couldn't see beyond that... uh, beyond... you know, it's like when you have your eye... your hand up in front of your eye you can't see your hand, you know.

PV: You've had those problems before – the Newport Folk Festival way, way back when you did the acoustic set and then came back with Mike Bloomfleld and a bunch of people and did the electric...

BD: I don't know how I keep going, you know (laughing) I just... I don't have any plan (laughing) **I'll tell you that much. It's day by day, you know. That's all I can think.**

PV: You do some great new songs here in the sets, here at the Warfield too. Are you working currently on the new album?

BD: Um...

PV: ...course, you're performing now. What are your plans on the new...

BD: I don't know. Like I say, I may record an album when, uh, when the time feels right, you know. I'll take whatever I have into the studio and record it.

PV: Financially you could have retired 10-15 years ago.

BD: Financially you can retire... if you just think financially, you can retire when you're born really, but, uh,...

PV: What gives you a feeling of fulfillment now at this point in your life?

BD: Uh, just watching, uh... seeing different growth in people, trying to love as much as I can.

PV: Your religious beliefs may stay the same, do you foresee continuing recording songs of that nature for very much longer?

BD: Well, I don't know. The way things change now, I don't know what's gonna change... this change how... which way it's gonna go. I'm sure it's gonna have some changing. You can't record every album and have it be a *Saved* type album, because, you know, you just don't get that many kinda songs all in a row like that. So I'm sure there'll be some difference but I don't... couldn't say what it would be.

PV: You have a yacht now. Are you enjoying yachting?

BD: It's not a yacht, it's a sailing ship. It's like an old schooner. Me and this other guy have it. It took about three years to build and it was built from the ground up and, uh... I don't know, you know, it's just there.

PV: There was another story I remember reading in the press that when the yacht was unveiled you weren't there at the unveiling and...

BD: I couldn't make it. I was on the road as a matter of fact. Yeah, we were playing in Cincinnati that night, I think.

PV: They expected you to be there too. You can't please everybody can you?

BD: You can't be in two places at the same time (laughs)**.**

PV: How is it to live with that all the time – everything you say being picked apart, knowing that the world is watching you at all times?

BD: I don't pay no mind to it. I don't you know... it just don't have any concern for me really.

PV: What's in the future for you? That you can talk about?

BD: Well, we're just gonna play these shows and, you know, I'll be doing different things, you know, trying... we'll probably go round the world one of these years again. Uh...

PV: Just for pleasure? Not performing?

BD: No. we'll probably be going to perform and for pleasure. I like to mix business with pleasure.

PV: You're on the road a lot, aren't you?

BD: Yeah! Well, half the year. That's not... you know, some people are on more, some people are on less. 'Bout half the year.

PV: Bob, thank you very, very much. I've certainly appreciated it and I've been looking forward to this for a long time.

19 November 1980
Robert Hilburn Interview, San Francisco, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 231-234.

Robert Hilburn of the *Los Angeles Times*, clearly a favorite of Dylan since he's been allowed numerous interviews, conducts this one in Bob's hotel room on November 19th 1980, prior to that nights concert at the Fox Warfield. The interview centers around Dylan's conversion to Christianity. It was published in the Los Angeles Times of November 23rd and re-printed in the Boston Globe of 26th November. These two articles are almost identical although the Globe version does mix things around a bit, omits several items and even attributes to Dylan something said by Hilburn in the *L.A. Times* version. The following year, this article was again reprinted in the *Sonlyght Special* (Vol. 2, No. 4, April 1981) under the heading "Dylan Stands By Born Again Life".

BOB DYLAN SAYS HE'S TRULY BORN-AGAIN
"There was a presence in the room that couldn't have been anyone other than Jesus"

San Francisco – Bob Dylan has finally confirmed in an interview what he has been saying in his music for 18 months. He is a born-again Christian. Dylan says that he accepted Jesus in his heart in 1978 after a **"vision and feeling"** during which the room moved; **"There was a presence in the room that couldn't have been anybody but Jesus."**

He was initially reluctant to tell his friends or put his feelings into songs, but he was so committed to his gospel music by late 1979 that he did not perform any of his old songs during a tour. He said that he feared the old material might be **"anti-God"**.

Believing now that the old and new songs are compatible, Dylan again sings such stinging rockers as *Like A Rolling Stone* alongside such born-again treatises as *Gotta Serve Somebody*.

Sitting in his hotel room here before a concert, Dylan, whose family is Jewish, sat on a couch and smoked a cigarette as he discussed his religious experience.

"The funny thing is a lot of people think that Jesus comes into a persons' life only when they are either down and out or are miserable or just old and withering away," Dylan said. **"That's not the way it was for me."**

"I was doing fine. I had come a long way in just the year we were on the road (in 1978)**. I was relatively content, but a very close friend of mine mentioned a couple of things to me and one of them was Jesus."**

"Well, the whole idea of Jesus was foreign to me. I said to myself, "I can't deal with that. Maybe later." But later it occurred to me that I trusted this person and I had nothing to do for the next couple of days so I called the person back and I said I was willing to listen about Jesus".

Through a friend, Dylan met two young pastors.

"I was kind of skeptical, but I was also open", he said. **"I certainly wasn't cynical. I asked lots of questions, questions like, "What's the son of God, What's all that mean – dying for my sins?"**

Slowly, Dylan began to accept that **"Jesus was real and I wanted that... I knew that He wasn't going to come into my life and make it miserable, so one thing led to another... until I had this feeling, this vision and feeling."**

Dylan, the most acclaimed songwriter of the rock era, had been unwilling to grant interviews since the release last year of the gospel-dominated *Slow Train Coming* album, suggesting that anyone who wanted to know what he felt could simply listen to that work. The album was a passionate testimony to Christian salvation, devotion and doctrine. Though the album became one of Dylan's biggest sellers, many of his own fans felt confused, even betrayed: The man who once urged his audience to question all authority was suddenly embracing what some believed was the most simplistic of religious sentiments; furthermore, some critics argued, Dylan's attitudes were smug. Surely, many insisted, this was just another peculiar turn in Dylan's ever-shifting persona.

Even when he returned last Spring with another gospel album, the less commercially successful *Saved*, rumors abounded that he had abandoned the born-again beliefs. But Dylan shows on his present tour have refuted that speculation. Ten of his 17 songs on opening night were from the last two albums.

In the interview, too, Dylan stressed that his beliefs are deeply rooted: **"It's in my system."**

At the same time, Dylan showed that he has not lost his questioning spirit. Asked about the political activism of fundamentalist Christian groups like the Moral Majority, he replied, **"I think people have to be careful about all that... It's real dangerous. You can find anything you want in the Bible. You can twist it around any way you want and a lot of people do that. I just don't think you can legislate morality... The basic thing, I feel, is to get in touch with Christ yourself. He will lead you. Any preacher who is a real preacher will tell you that: "Don't follow me, follow Christ."**

Dylan still seemed uncertain about discussing his religious views when he began his tour here on Nov. 9, sidestepping questions on the topic at a news conference backstage after the opening show. But once he touched on the subject in the hotel interview, he spoke freely. The interview centers on his new direction in music, but it would be wrong to infer that Dylan has become a "Jesus-freak" stereotype. During the interview, and during other, more informal chats, he spoke with equal zest about various matters, including the decision to do his old material again.

"This show evolved from the one we did last year," he said, **"It is probably going to evolve even more. Some people say you should have several acoustic numbers all in a row, just me and a guitar."**

RH: Any of your songs that you couldn't sing today? Any song that you couldn't relate to?
BD: I don't think so. I could probably sing them all, even *Queen Jane Approximately*.
RH: Why didn't you do any of the old songs on the 1979 tour?
BD: I truly had a born-again experience, if you want to call it that. It's an over-used term, but it's something that people can relate to. It happened in 1978. I always knew there was a God or a creator of the universe and a creator of the mountains and the sea and all that kind of thing, but I wasn't conscious of Jesus and what that had to do with the supreme creator.
RH: After you had the vision, I understand you attended a three-month Bible course at a church in Los Angeles?

BD: At first, I said "There's no way I can devote three months to this. I've got to be back on the road soon." But I was sleeping one day and I just sat up in bed at 7 in the morning and I was compelled to get dressed and drive over to the Bible school. I couldn't believe I was there.

RH: But you had already accepted Jesus in your heart?

BD: Yeah, but I hadn't told anybody about it because I felt they would say, "Aw, come on." Most of the people I know don't believe that Jesus was resurrected, that He is alive. It's like He was just another prophet or something, one of many good people. That's not the way it was any longer for me. I had always read the Bible, but I only looked at it as literature. I was never really instructed in it in a way that was meaningful to me.

RH: I had assumed that these feelings came to you at a crisis point in your life, a time when you were desperately needing something else to believe in.

BD: No. I had gone so far that I didn't even think there was anything left. I thought, "Well, everybody has got their own truth." What works for one man is fine as long as it works for him. I had given up looking and searching for it.

RH: But didn't you go to Israel? You seemed to be searching for some religious...?

BD: Not really. If I was searching, it was just to... get down to the root reality of the way things really are, to pull the mask off. My thing was always to pull the mask off of whatever was going on. It's like war. People don't look at war as a business. They look at it as an emotional thing.

When you get right down to it, however, war – unless one people need another peoples land – is a business. If you look at it that way, you can come to terms with it. There are certain people who make a lot of money off of war the same way people make money off blue jeans. To say it was something else always irritated me.

RH: Did you start telling friends about it when you went to the Bible classes?

BD: No, I didn't want to get myself up. I didn't want to reflect on the Lord at all because if I told people and then I didn't keep going, they'd say, "Oh well, I guess it was just another one of those things that didn't work out." I didn't know myself if I could go for three months. But I did begin telling a few people after a couple of months and a lot of them got angry at me.

RH: Do you have any fear that what you're saying now may come back to haunt you in five years – that you aren't really committed?

BD: I don't think so. If I would have felt anything like that, I think it would have come up to the surface by now.

RH: But we've seen so many rock stars get involved with gurus and maharishis and then move on.

BD: Well, this is no maharishi trip with me. Jesus is definitely not that to me.

RH: What did you think about some of the hostile reviews to Slow Train Coming?

BD: You can't look at reviews.

RH: Do you see how people could think some of the messages in the album were heavy-handed?

BD: It's in my system. I don't really have enough time to talk about it. If someone really wants to know, I can explain it to them, but there are other people who can do it just as well. I don't feel compelled to do it. I was doing a bit of that last year on the stage. I was saying stuff I figured people needed to know. I thought I was giving people an idea of what was behind the songs. I don't think it's necessary any more. When I walk around some of the towns we go to, however, I'm totally convinced people need Jesus. Look at the junkies and the winos and the troubled people. It's all a sickness which can be healed in an instant. The powers that be won't let that happen. The powers that be say it has to be healed politically.

RH: What about some of the new songs? Some seem only remotely religious.

BD: They've evolved. I've made my statement and I don't think I could make it any better than in some of those songs. Once I've said what I need to say in a song, that's it. I don't want to repeat myself.

June 1981
Sandra Jones interview, London(?)

Taken from Jean-Pierre Duclos' excellent booklet. 'N'Avez-vous Rien A Lire? – Numero 2'.
Translated from French by J. J. Stevens. April 1984.

BOB DYLAN: 'I AM NO LONGER A REVOLUTIONARY'
by Sandra Jones: Ciné-Revue'

A rock star and poet followed by millions. Bob Dylan was unquestionably the musician who had the greatest influence over young people in the sixties. His most famous songs became the rallying cry for a number of 'revolutionary' movements of the time. Worshipped like a god, followed like a true messenger, he showed the way to the beginning of a new musical age: folk-rock owed its origins to him. Continually running away from home from ten onwards, recording his first album at twenty. Bob Dylan has had an explosive career which is far raptures and, despite a number of voluntary retirements that are shrouded in absolute secrecy, he still regains a world-wide phenomenon today. For the first time in ages (he no longer enjoys hearing the word 'interview' since his awkward altercation with a German reporter), he has agreed to speak to our colleague, Sandra Jones; also for the first time he talks openly about his career and his life, about accusations that trouble him (he is supposed to have beaten his children) and about the fact that he remains a fascinating personality in the music world.

SJ: What was that incredible question, without doubt the stupidest and most irritating of all that you were asked three years ago in Europe? Clearly you've never forgotten it...

BD: Perhaps that's one of the reasons that brought me back here... I want to put the record straight! I'll never forget that obnoxious question. Put yourself in my shoes. I was coolly asked: 'How does it feel to sing in the same Nuremberg stadium where Hitler made those inflammatory statements forty years ago?' If that isn't a stupid question, what is?

SJ: And what did you reply?

BD: I said that I'd come back in a few years time and make him eat his words.

SJ: You've had plenty of time to prepare for your revenge. If you met the same man tomorrow, you'd probably tell him what you really thought.

BD: Don't you worry about that: I'd certainly have a suitable reply for him if he dares to cross swords with me again! He's a German reporter who has achieved some kind of notoriety already, if I'm not mistaken, by delving into 'personal' matters! But I'll see him again and I'll tell him why I couldn't condemn that wretched Hitler and his notorious Nuremberg speech and I'll explain that when I sang in that stadium in 1978 I was really angry at a group of cops who had jumped on some kids. All the kids had done wrong was to approach my trailer.

SJ: If Bob Dylan could go back in time, would he travel the same road, would he leave behind everything he had, to devote his whole life to music?

BD: I don't think I can answer your question with all the honesty it deserves. First, you can never rebuild the past, and that's how it should be. So, it's not humanly possible to answer that question. Over twenty years a man accumulates experiences, mistake and successes. At the end of the day, he finds out that he has changed totally and that he couldn't travel the same road again. With the experience that I've gained, how could I go back to my youth and say I'd do it all over again? Thinking it through, I'm sure I would never have left home. I got on very well with my parents that they would have a folk-singer as a son. And then, what has been termed the rock revolution, didn't really happen at all. It was just the logical conclusion of an explosive situation, a situation caused by an experimental phase that was to bring about a great upheaval in the music

world. Folk music and rock music are two closely linked phenomena. It's no coincidence that Elvis Presley was a great folksinger before becoming the king of rock n' roll and that he started his career in Memphis.

SJ: Two of your most well-known songs, 'Blowin' In The Wind' and 'Mr Tambourine Man' have served as anthems for a whole generation. Do you consider yourself to be the leader of this generation, do you feel in some way responsible for it?

BD: It could just as well have been somebody else. Doubtless I was actually the first one to speak directly to those young people and I'm pleased about that. But I've never been their messenger. I don't feel my work has any of those aims. At a particular point in time young people needed to believe in something and music became the religion they adopted. Something that inspired quite a few of them with hope for the future, but perhaps not all of them. I, my friends and all the other singers from that time had a specific function to fulfill and we did fulfill it. During those fantastic times in 1968, what would those young people have been singing if the Beatles and other musicians, of whom I was one, hadn't been there to help them? All revolutions have always had a musical backcloth. History proves that, from the eighteenth century in France through to the Russian revolution of 1917. This phenomenon isn't something new or specific to our time.

SJ: It seems that your last two albums, 'Slow Train Coming' and 'Saved' haven't had the success that your record company anticipated. What do you think of that? Don't you feel that you are somewhat a victim of what is today called 'the backlash' against the values of the sixties, that you are experiencing the indifference of a public that has perhaps become blasé about things?

BD: I'm not aware of the significance (in Europe) **of that 'backlash' term you are talking about, although I've heard quite a bit about it. The truth is that I wanted to give my life a new meaning, to make it more spiritual. Today I'm accused of being a follower of religion. But I've always been a follower! My thoughts, my personal needs have always been expressed through my songs; you can feel them there even in 'Mr Tambourine Man'. When I write a song, when I make a record, I don't think about whether it'll sell millions of copies. I only think about making it, the musical end-product, the sound, and the rhythmic effect of the words. It's purely a technical piece of work because the most important thing is to come out with something that's perfect artistically. Even Charlie Chaplin used to say that and I respect him for that judgment.**

SJ: In the past, you've had some very hard words to say about drugs and other forms of 'artificial escapes'; was this a conscious stance, or did you adopt this position because of the anti-drug campaign that has spread across the States in the last few years?

BD: I've never done anything I've been told to do or served a cause. Drugs are dangerous and that's why I'm speaking out against using them. My position is perhaps a hard-line one; it's a firm commitment against that type of escape. I hate to see people become the slaves of drugs. I've never taken drugs, even when nobody was interested in my songs, even when I was accused of being too rich to talk about certain things. I think that taking these stands has proved I was right.

SJ: Why did you make a film like 'Renaldo And Clara', which lasted four hours and which was rather baffling to most people?

BD: That was a failure I admit. But I wanted to make a very personal film. No star has the right to hide what is real about his life and his personality. That's the reason for making that film. If I am a legend, as you say, I've set a good example.

SJ: Do you like women, Mr Dylan?

BD: Let's say that I'm envious of women, because I consider that they are the real victors in the greatest battles of the century. I've come to understand that through the women I've loved – Joan Baez; Sara, the mother of my five children; and my most recent companion (the New Zealander Ra Aranga.) They've given me a lot; they've taught me to become a better person. Thanks to them, I've matured.

SJ: But you've been accused of having beaten your wife Sara and your children. It's said she left you to protect them. Is that true?

BD: There is a private Bob Dylan and a public Bob Dylan. One came out of legend and the other loved his life like a man. The one Dylan has no control over the other. It's impossible to know what lies behind all these rumours. What is certain is that the this is the right moment to justify or blame myself. They have only ever been able to imply that I did this or that. All I've said is that that isn't part of my job.

SJ: A few weeks ago you were forty. Do you feel old?

BD: It's only men's minds that grow old and I've held on to the spirit of my younger years. I'm still excited at the prospect of singing to thousands of young people. I still get as much pleasure out of creating something new. I spend hours playing the guitar and harmonica. I don't feel the weight of the years. And, even if I did, I would still be a happy man who loves life.

SJ: Mr Dylan, what is your present 'market' value?

BD: I'm worth one and a half million dollars. The cost of a supersonic plane. Maybe a bit less...

12 June 1981
Yves Bigot Interview, Transatlantic Telephone Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 235-238

Transatlantic telephone interview between Bob Dylan in Detroit and Yves Bigot in Paris. One of three transatlantic interviews Dylan gave that day. This session was broadcast on Radio Europe 1 on June 22 and 23 as part of 2 one-hour specials on Dylan called *Rock A My My*. The broadcast was just prior to the concert in Paris at Colombes Stade Yves du-Manor on the 23rd. When broadcast, the questions were spoken in French by Michelle Abraham with Dylan's response, whilst just audible, being overdubbed in French.
The French broadcast was translated and transcribed for the Dylan magazine *Fourth Time Around* but I've chosen to transcribe directly from the tape of the telephone conversation because this is substantially different and, of course, a more accurate record of the original conversation.

YB: Hello Bob!
BD: Yeah.
YB: Where are you calling me from?
BD: I'm calling you from Detroit.
YB: Yeah, you are gonna play there tonight?
BD: Tonight.
YB: Yeah, and how is the tour going?
BD: Oh, it's going pretty good.
YB: Yeah, and behind each one of your tours there has always been a very strong spirit – I mean you don't tour just to promote an album, and behind each of your tours there has been a very strong spirit. Which is the one of this tour, of this year?
BD: Well, I usually tour, you know, between albums, and I've been touring between albums over here for the past few years. You know, so we've kind of been on tour for the past two years. You'll be seeing the result of the shows from the past two years and a few new things, a bunch of things that nobody's heard before.
YB: Yeah and who are your musicians who are with you on this tour?
BD: Well, it's the band I've been working with for the past, in the recent past few years. Jim Keltner playing drums, Tim Drummond, who's playing bass guitar; on guitars I've got Fred Tackett and Steve Ripley, and then on the keyboards I've got somebody by the name of Willie Smith. And I have four backing singers, one girl was with me the last time I was there, her name is Carolyn Dennis. And then I've got some other girls you haven't seen before.
YB: You have written a lot of new songs lately. When can we expect a new album?
BD: Well, very very soon, in fact very soon, maybe in the next few weeks, I hope anyway.
YB: So you've already recorded it?
BD: Yes, it's already been recorded and mixed and pressed I believe and it should be out as soon as they can get it to the stores.
YB: And who produced the album?
BD: A guy named Chuck Plotkin and myself.
YB: The last album you produced yourself was *Blood On The Tracks*?
BD: Yes, exactly. That's the last album I did produce by myself and this is the next one.
YB: Yes and the sound was very very good on that album. What do you use producers for, when you use them?
BD: Well, the past two albums I used producers to organize everything in the studio for me and to come up with some ideas and who are the musicians, what kind of musicians to use. And to help me sort out the songs and make some sense out of what I do. Just when

I come in with a bunch of songs – somebody who come in and oversee that and put it together, and come out with an album. And they'll be responsible for the sound of it. And this time I wanted to do it by myself.

YB: You've always been very interested in rhythms on your last albums and on your last tour there when you came to Europe you used reggae, salsa, and even funk rhythms. Are you very interested in the last developments lately of, you know, jazz....

BD: Oh sure, well, I just use about any kind of rhythm that I can... that I feel, you know, that I feel like I wanna play. Mm, yeah I use a lot of different types of rhythms. Some songs are just old hillbilly kind of rhythm you know, and some songs have like, I guess a 12 bar blues type of rhythm and then between them it's just about anything that happens to find its way into the song. I kind of use all kinds of rhythms just to keep it different.

YB: You use any kind of music, when it's real music... but, I mean, when you can feel any kind of music beat... rock or hillbilly or blue-grass or blues or rhythm and blues.

BD: Yes. if I can feel it I'll play it. If I can feel it I'll do it that way.

YB: You know, some people who study behavior say that one only repeats during his whole life what he thinks and what he wants to say to the world when he's 16 or 17. I think you have proven them wrong over your career but what would you think would be the thread that run throughout all your life or your career.

BD: I didn't quite understand that. The... the career.

YB: Yeah, or through all your life, there is a thing, a constant thing that you wanted to express through all your life.

BD: That I stayed honest, that I tried to be true, and didn't lie to myself or nobody else.

YB: Do you believe in fate or in destiny?

BD: Mm – Well, I do, sure.

YB: Do you believe that everything has been planned for each one of us or do you believe that each time we have to make the choice we are completely free to do that choice but, that we have a destiny?

BD: I do believe that things are planned for everyone of us. But I also believe that we have free will to change it at one time or another, although I'm not so sure about changing the end result.

YB: Yourself, do you feel the same, the same person, the same human being as when you were a little boy, or do you feel different?

BD: Well, you know it's like the French say: Everything changes but it stays the same.

YB: Except you grow wiser, maybe.

BD: I hope.

YB: It's just the experience.

BD: Yeah.

YB: You said once, I think, 2 or 3 years ago, something that touched me very deeply, among all the many things you did, you said that to feel reality you have to be vulnerable and I would like to know if your faith has changed something to that belief.

BD: Er, what was that again?

YB: You said that to feel reality, to be close to it you have to be vulnerable.

BD: Vulnerable? (Not understanding pronunciation).

YB: Oh yeah! Maybe it's the wrong word in English. You have to be touched, you know, by everything in life, everyday, you know.

BD: Aha – I still believe that – yes, I do that.

YB: And, er... you think that... I mean... You don't feel stronger now? Or do you still feel that, you know, you have to have a certain, you know, label of sensitivity?

BD: Well.... [clearly having difficulty understanding the question which, like all the rest is in broken English, with a heavy French accent and on a line subject to a lot of background noise]... **I think that's correct, yeah.**

YB: I know that you are a Gemini, and I am a Gemini myself, so maybe that's one of the reasons why I was, you know, touched so much by your movie *Renaldo & Clara* and by

the album *Street Legal*. And you talked very much about personality, about the difference between "*that enemy within*" as you call him and... Can you tell me a little bit about that? Was it really the theme of the movie?

BD: I think so. I think it was like identity, you know... the identity that is... one identity being... interrolling with the other identity. I think you'd say that about that.

YB: But do you think that much of evil... maybe not evil, but much of violence in the world and in the individual people is caused by this duality?

BD: I do think that, yeah. Sure, when one side takes over another side, one side is feeling stronger at that moment.

YB: And maybe it's when somebody is not who he wants to be also he can become very paranoid.

BD: Sure, it's extremely dangerous.

YB: Did that ever happen to you?

BD: Oh sure, just about every day. (laughs)

YB: And wasn't *Renaldo & Clara* about all this?

BD: Yes! It was!

YB: And, would you wish to do another tour just like the Rolling Thunder Revue because it was really....

BD: No, you won't see that again.

YB: Why? Because once is enough?

BD: Well, yeah, I think so. You know things just couldn't go on that way.

YB: The times have changed?

BD: That's right. Well, you know, anything's possible, it could happen again. Yeah it could happen. I doubt it would, but it could.

YB: Are you going to do another movie someday?

BD: I would like to. I would really like to do that Yves. I just don't have – I haven't found, what do you call it? A script or something.

YB: How was the experience of doing *Renaldo & Clara*?

BD: Oh, it was invaluable, an invaluable experience.

YB: What about now – we are going to talk about what is going to happen now – what about the concerts you're going to be playing in France? Is it the first time you're going to play in stadiums? No! You played Forest Hills and many stadiums in the States?

BD: Oh, sure I've played stadiums before.

YB: But, you know, in France it's going to be the hugest concerts ever.

BD: I hope so. I hope it will be that way.

YB: I know, I saw you from a few – ten or twenty meters – at the Bruce Springsteen concert in Los Angeles, at the Sports Arena. And, I think you were impressed.

BD: Oh sure, I was. Listen, Yves, I've a show to do tonight and I've got to get on the bus, otherwise I won't have any way to get there.

YB: Okay, Bob. I thank you very, very much for this interview and for your time and for everything you did. And we are looking forward to welcoming you to France.

BD: Alright, well maybe I'll get to see you when I'm there, get to meet you.

YB: Okay. So do I. Thanks a lot and have a good concert. Goodbye, Bob.

BD: Bye.

12 June 1981
Tim Blackmore Transatlantic Telephone Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 469-471.

Transatlantic telephone interview between Bob Dylan in Chicago and Tim Blackmore in London. One of three transatlantic interviews Dylan gave that day. This session was broadcast on London Capital Radio on June 15.

Announcer: Here we were, Friday night, here at Capital Radio, half past eight it was in the evening. Brr, brr, went the trimphone. "Pick it up, will you". "Accept the call from Mr Bob Dylan". "Well certainly," said Tim Blackmore. Now, first of all, they talked about his current tour which arrives in London in just eleven days from now.

BD: Well, we've just done playing in Chicago. Uh, huh. We've been off the road for about six months.

TB: And how's it looking?

BD: Basically it's about the same. Actually, its er.... the crowds are a little bigger, this time we're playing outdoors – we haven't played outdoors in a few years so that changes the atmosphere some. Summer nights just kind of hang in the air, gets kind of sticky and kind of humid much quicker than it does indoors.

TB: Right, well it's three years since you were here in London and you played the devastating concerts at Earl's Court and also down at Blackbushe. Are you looking forward to coming back to London?

BD: Oh, sure. It seems like they appreciate different things in Europe than they do here. Here they take a lot of things for granted. We've been playing some new songs that nobody has ever heard before. I think people in England react more spontaneously to the stuff that I do than the people here, you know, you sit here for so long and they take you for granted, you know, and anyway, I've taken a lot of my earlier songs from a lot of old English ballads and Irish ballads and stuff like that, so people will probably relate to that a lot more over there than they do here. Here, I'm not really sure if people are aware of where songs like *Master Of War* or *Girl From The North Country*, where those songs really originate and come from.

TB: What was particularly exciting... When you played Earl's Court last time was, I think a lot of us who followed your music and had been with you over the years, we were, perhaps, a little worried if you'd be playing the old songs when you came last time and you came in with those tremendous new arrangements. Were you at all nervous about whether people would accept the old songs and new arrangements?

BD: They did in Europe and in England. They accepted them, they didn't much accept them here and they called them – you know, I think at the time they were saying "Oh, Dylan's on a new wave" or "Disco Kick" or something like that, but they, over there, they seemed to.... I didn't think of my songs as disco or they seemed to apply meaning to them which I'd never intended and I didn't find that to be true over there.

TB: Does that mean when you started this tour that you're now doing in America that you've avoided doing re-arrangements of the old songs?

BD: Well. I wouldn't call them re-arrangements of the old songs. I think they are really more true to their character now. The band I've got with me now is, I think, the best band I've ever had. Everybody seems to understand my music more than any band I've ever had – usually I put together bands that wouldn't be together otherwise, but this time it seemed like that this band is just born to be, together with me.

TB: Is there anybody who was in the band that you brought over last time, who'll be coming with you this time?

BD: Well, there's just one girl, that's Carolyn Dennis – she's a really fine singer, she's been with me about three or four years. She's the only one I think that's been with me – most everybody else is new this time over, but I'm sure that you'll like the band.

TB: What's happened since you were here last is you've released the two albums, which really testified to your Christian faith. Are we going to hear more of those songs in your set now?

BD: No, you won't be hearing any more of those songs but what happens, you know, is over a period of time is all of those songs become old songs. And we've just finished a new album and I think is really good. We just finished that in the last month and it's supposed to be ready for release now and we'll be playing some stuff off that album too, and then things that go back as far as *Blowin' In The Wind* – I'm trying to do as many songs as I can from just all kind of periods of time.

TB: Is this new album something you've done with Jerry Wexler and Barry Beckett again?

BD: No, I did it by myself this time. Me and another guy named Chuck Plotkin – we just -I got tired of making records sort of, you know, that kind of didn't come out the way that I had planned it to be, but this time, this album, it sounds pretty much the way I hear my music, that I intend it to be. I think you'll like it.

TB: Well I certainly look forward to it. Did you have any nervousness about coming here after that gap the previous time?

BD: Hmm. Well, yes, maybe so, maybe I did have a little bit of nervousness – but, you always do. Usually the reception makes me nervous more than the actual performances – I don't get too nervous during the performances, but all the attention and all the media, you know, all that makes me kind of nervous. When you come in at the airport and there's photographers and, you just... people ask you questions. That kind of makes me nervous.

TB: A lot of people listening to you Bob would probably be surprised to hear you say that after what is twenty years of making music before people, that you're still nervous in front of the attention the media gives you.

BD: (laughs) **No... I really don't — It just makes me nervous. I don't, you know.... I just feel, like, people put me in a position that I didn't really start out to be in. I like to perform, I like to play, but all the rest of it just kind of confuses me sometimes. I'm kind of camera shy. Anyway, I never did like to have my picture taken.**

TB: You don't seem to be microphone shy though, you're talking into this telephone very freely.

BD: Well, that's a different thing because you can't see me. (laughs)

TB: Well, I certainly look forward to seeing you. What do you think the chances would be of you perhaps coming to see us at Capital Radio when you are in London.

BD: Oh, well, I don't know – it depends if we have the time, you know. Maybe you'll come backstage at one of the shows or something and I'll get the chance to meet you.

TB: Well, I would certainly like to do that very much!

BD: OK Tim, listen, I gotta catch the bus.

TB: OK, Well I hope you have a good bus trip and we look forward to seeing you over here in just a couple of weeks time. Good luck with the rest of the tour on your side of the pond.

BD: OK, thank you.

TB: Thank you.

BD: Bye.

12 June 1981
Paul Gambaccini Interview, Transatlantic Telephone Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 239-240.

Transatlantic telephone interview between Bob Dylan in Detroit and Paul Gambaccini in London. One of three transatlantic interviews Dylan gave that day. This session was broadcast on BBC Radio 1 on June 20 in the "Rock On" program.
Taken from the circulating tape.

PG: Who's coming in the backing band this time? What's the music gonna be like?

BD: I 'm bringing the same band that I have been with for the last two years.

PG: You'll be at Earl's Court, which is where you were last time. Were you surprised last time by the friendly response?

BD: Ah, sometimes the response is less than friendly, and sometimes it's friendly, but over the years you just kind of get used to any kind of response.

PG: I know that recently in the States you've been performing a lot of your inspirational material. Will you be doing that in London?

BD: We'll be doing some of it. Most of the stuff comes from all the albums. And then we just finished an album, so we'll be including some new songs too. The name of the new album is *Shot Of Love*.

PG: Does that continue in the inspirational vein?

BD: Well, you kind of have to decide that for yourself. It's different than the last, it's different than *Saved* and it's different than *Slow Train*, and it sounds old but it's new.

PG: Does it feature any of your recent players like Barry Beckett?

BD: No, I didn't do this one down in Muscle Shoals, I did it in California. So Barry's not on this one. I did use my usual band. Actually Ronnie Wood played on one song, so did Ringo.

PG: I've received some very exciting mail on the last couple of albums, because some people who shared your sense of what might be called ministry or message were very excited that you were with them on it and other people had thought, well, what is Bob doing, now?

BD: Yeah, I don't know. Sometimes it takes... you know the older albums don't really mean something to some people until they're hearing the new one and in retrospect they go back and hear something else from the path that'll seem like it takes the steps that leads up to the new one. I think this new album we did is, for me, I think it's the most explosive album I've ever done. Even going back to *Blonde On Blonde* or *Freewheelin'* or any of those, *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61*, or whatever they were... I think this one is, for it's time right now, will be perceived in the same way and I may be totally wrong in saying that, but I feel that same way about this album as I did about when we recorded *Bringing It All Back Home*, that was like a break through point, it's the kind of music I've been striving to make and I believe that in time people will see that. It's hard to explain it, it's that indefinable thing, you know, that people can write about, but they can only write about it and around it, you can't really take charge over it, because it is what it is and you can't really expound on it, it itself is the beginning and the end of what it is.

PG: In *Blood On The Tracks*, which was another of my favorite albums, you were speaking right from the heart. Is that the kind of feeling you have lyrically on this album?

BD: Well no, that was a different sort of thing. That was a break through album for me too in another sense of lyrics. I've done things I've never done before. This is just a different sort of thing, it's like the thing I've always wanted to do. And, for one reason or another, I have always been bound in certain areas where I couldn't have the right

structure around some kind of things to make it come off, in a way, because mainly, when I don't do that much talking, so when I 'm playing, you have to be able to communicate with the people around you in order to get your point of view across. And If you have to do too much of that communication it gets confusing and something is lost along the way. And this time that didn't happen. Everybody was pretty much together.

PG: Do you feel then, that you now have accomplished what you want to as an artist, or...?

BD: I think so. I think the next album I do I don't... I think I will do an instrumental album now.

PG: You think so?? [surprised reaction]

BD: Yeah. I've come as far as there is to come and now I 'm gonna start just doing instrumentals.

PG: Are you finding at the moment inspiration from any other artists, as I think you probably found from Dire Straits a couple of years ago?

BD: Oh, yeah well, I just spoke with Mark recently... mm, I've always liked Gordon Lightfoot...

PG: Recently here, Bruce Springsteen's gone down very well. Do you like him?

BD: Yeah, Bruce is a very, very talented guy.

PG: Did you know that Bruce has included *This Land Is Your Land* in his concert program?

BD: Oh he has? That's amazing! That's good. Well maybe he'll start doing *Blowin' In The Wind*! Maybe he'll do an album with Bob Dylan songs!

PG: Well, funnily enough, I heard on the radio recently, Manfred Mann's version of *With God On Our Side*. And I thought that in this current atmosphere where there is so much talk about nuclear disarmament and the talks, missile talks, particularly in Europe, where it is a great concern at the moment, that these songs of yours from the early albums about the nuclear disarmament situation take on a new timeliness. Do you ever think about that?

BD: No. Not really, but it doesn't surprise me. I thought they were timely then, and just as sure they're timely now.

Blowin' In The Wind plays followed by *Heart Of Mine*.

2 July 1981
Dave Herman Interview, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 241-250.

Conducted at the White House Hotel in London, England on July 2, 1981 by New York DJ Dave Herman. Broadcast by WNEW-FM Radio, New York, July 27 1981. Released on the promotional album *DYLAN LONDON INTERVIEW JULY 1981*, Columbia AS 1259, September 1981 to help promote the *Shot Of Love* album. This peculiar official release was packaged to look like a bootleg with white sleeve and facsimile rubber stamp on the front cover. Later, when promoting the *Oh Mercy* album, Dylan's reluctance to provide an interview for a two-hour syndicated radio special led to this interview being re-used as a filler.

What you can't get from the transcript is Dylan doodling on his guitar throughout the interview although it rather adds to rather than detracts from the ambience.

DH: Last night in Earl's Court, here in London, I guess there were about twenty thousand people in there and when I kind of saw them, I guess it was when you did *It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)* and every last one of them in the place was standing on their chair and it was pretty... out front at least there was a pretty special kind of a feeling. I was reminded once again, that you really do have a very... you know, that you play a very special part in the lives of an extraordinary amount of people, you know, all over the world and I gathered that this has always made you a bit uncomfortable, that people hold you in a very special place?

BD: I don't feel uneasy with the part of it, that part of it, but the other part of it, you know the part where you're expected to... go to parties... and... record stores, be somebody all the time, you know. That's what makes me feel uncomfortable.

DH: Or the part that makes people presuming you have somehow a lot of answers that they might not to the larger questions?

BD: Well, if you... the answers to those questions, they've got to be in those songs I've written. Someplace, if you know where to look, I think you'll find the answers to those questions. It's right there in the songs. Better than I could say it.

Herman tries to discourage Bob from playing the guitar.

DH: Maybe that's why, over the years, that you have given so very few interviews, because probably people just come by and, once again, hope that you're gonna come up with some answers that are in the songs. In the lyrics of your songs, and in the music. But you've given, I don't think, more than maybe half a dozen major interviews. You never really talk a whole lot to the press or radio people.

BD: No, I haven't.

DH: Do performers and artists feel that there's some kind of adversaries there, when reporters come in...

BD: Well, performers feel that.., they don't feel they're adversaries, but they do feel that... they feel a lot of times that their points are not taken the right way or they feel imposed upon to answer questions that have really little to do with why they fill halls or sell records.

DH: Well, I got some questions for you that I hope aren't those and I hope that they're also questions that the answers of which aren't really in your songs. For instance it seems to me that... we are sitting in London, and Mrs Thatcher is the prime minister here and back home it seems to be a kind of a new political wave of conservatism sweeping across the

world and I wonder if that kind of concerns you at all, if you've noticed the change in the political winds, so to speak?

BD: No. I don't know much change between conservatism or liberalism. I can't see much differences between either of those things.

DH: But there are areas of relative freedom and there are areas of relative repression and I think that in the 1960s, where a lot of us come out of it all, people were much freer to create, much freer to express their ideas at least in the western world, where it just seems to me there might...

BD: You think so?

DH: Well, I don't know. No, I just see... for instance there are groups of people that are boycotting sponsors of television shows that they don't like...

BD: But they don't like them for a specific reason, though. A lot of these people that are boycotting those shows they got children, they show things on those shows, they don't want their children to see. Television now goes into every home, there's not much you can do about it. It's better than outlawing TV-sets.

DH: Can't they just not have their children watch the TV, I mean...

BD: Think about forty years ago, there wasn't any TV-sets, so there was nothing to boycott...

DH: OK, well another thing is, ah, I was just reading recently where it seems that in the United States the abortion question is becoming one of the major political controversies at home.

BD: Well, that is just a diversion, though. Whenever you think about abortion, pro, con, you know, I think you should be thinking about those things, then they put you away with the bigger things, which you're not thinking about. So you get everybody thinking about abortion and they turn your back from it... not to say that abortion is not important! But you can make something so... you know cast a spell on something and make everybody look that way and then you come at them from another direction

DH: But that sounds like it's conspiratorial?

BD: Yeah, it does, doesn't it?

DH: Yeah, it does! I don't think it is, but I don't think people sit in rooms and say well, let's divert them with the abortion issue, and then we can slip this in while...

BD: You actually don't think so?

DH: That it's that calculated? You think it is?

BD: I don't know... Now abortion is important, I personally don't believe in it but..., unless of course somebody needs to have their life saved.

DH: Well, it's not a matter of believing in abortion...

BD: Eat too much candy and you gonna get sick!

DH: But people should have, it seems to me, just the right to make choices about themselves, if it doesn't hurt anybody else... it's like, you know...

BD: (laughs) **Well, everybody does have the choice to make about themselves...**

DH: Could you kind of just tell me what people mean, what it really means, when people describe themselves as "born-again", which is something we hear a lot about from a lot of people, there are millions of people that say that they're born again.

BD: Yeah. What they mean by saying that is that they're born again by the spirit from above. Born once is born with the spirit from below. Which, when you're born is the spirit that you're born with. Born again is born with the spirit from above, which is a little bit different.

DH: Do you know how it happens to people? Is it a decision that one makes or is it an experience that just comes from nowhere. Is it unconscious, is it conscious?

BD: Well, it happens in all kinds of ways. There's really no one way that it happens I guess. If you talk to this person that tells you that it was unconscious, if you talk to another one that says it was a conscious decision. Some people say they just heard a voice on a lonesome road, other people say they were in the middle of a football game, some

people were in the men's room of a Greyhound bus station, you know. Sometime, you don't have to be in any special situation, that it might come up, you know.

DH: Let's talk about *Shot Of Love*. It's the new album.

BD: You don't wanna talk about *Saved*? (laughs) **No one wants to talk about *Saved*!** (laughs more).

DH: I thought we'd come back into it. I think somebody once said "Don't look back"...

BD: Yeah... (laughs)... **Well, *Shot Of Love* is the new record, we have coming out...**

DH: And it's also a kind of a return, it seems to me, to an album of songs that cover a whole lot of different subjects, there are love songs in it, there's a song about Lenny Bruce. As opposed to *Saved*, which was really a collection of religious songs, it was one theme to that album, and *Shot Of Love* is a return to a more eclectic album. You know, I am wondering whether that isn't something that just happens haphazardly or whether it's something that's, what do you say, "Saved maybe was too much stuff in one vein or too narrow in scope, and maybe I ought to get back to doing a whole bunch of songs" or whether those were just the songs that came out of you?

BD: Yeah, those were the songs that just wanted to come out. I never know from one album to the next what kind of songs I'm gonna be doing. It amazes me that I even continue to make albums.

DH: What do you mean by that?

BD: It is always a miracle of some kind when I make an album, because... it's so contrary to the way I move. Working in a studio has always been very difficult for me.

Shot Of Love Plays.

DH: You approach record making a lot differently than a lot of people do? Some people spend a year in the studio.

BD: I approach record-making in the way that I learned how to make records when I started recording, when I recorded for John Hammond. And we work the same way.

DH: Which is?

BD: Which is, going into the studio and making a record. Right then and there. I know the other way and I know a lot of people do it the other way and it's successful for them, and, er... but I'm not interested in that aspect of recording. Laying down tracks and then coming back and perfecting those tracks and then perfecting lyrics, which seem to wanna go with those tracks. Songs are created in the recording studio. Where, for me, see I'm a live performer, I have to play songs which gonna relate to the faces that I'm singing to. And I can't do that if I was spending a year in the studio, working on a track, you know. It's not that important to me. No record is that important. I mean the world is gonna go on... who needs these records? You know what I mean?

DH: Well, but the point is though that the record... simply that's why it's called a record, I guess... it's forever. A record is forever too.

BD: A record is forever... well, it is forever.

DH: It's like a book, you know.

BD: It's forever, I guess... but... it sure is...

DH: You're saying that like you never thought about that before.

BD: No, I never did think about that before, but I see in my records..., I mean, gee, I hear records that I made twenty years ago, and I say 'Oh man, God, did I make that record, y'know?'

DH: But that record will be here if the world is a thousand years... I mean, that record is here Bob, long after you're gone, these records will be here and people will listen to them and think... well one thing or another about this guy who made these records, four hundred years ago.

BD: Oh, poor me! (laughs) **But, they seem important at the time! You know, they really do. Yeah, they are important, I'm not saying that records aren't important, but... it's also**

new. I mean, making records is new. Just the fact that we're doing this interview now, through this tape recorder, we couldn't have done this...

DH: There wouldn't have been any radio stations to play it on 75 years ago. The point remains that as an artist there must be some...

(Through the entire interview Dylan has been softly doodling on an acoustic guitar)

I just hope that this guitar... I don't know cause I can't hear it back... I hope it isn't louder than we are, which would make it difficult for people to hear us, I'm afraid. Even though I'm enjoying it immensely...

BD: Well. I'll play it softly then.

DH: Yeah, that'd be great. I'm enjoying hearing it. It's an old guitar. It's really beat up. It's been around the world a few times I guess.

BD: Well, I've carried it around the world a few times and I think somebody else carried it around before that too.

DH: Where were we? Ah... oh yeah, what I wanted to say about a record being forever that... There must be some concern from you as a man and artist that people will be hearing this thing and coming to conclusions about Bob Dylan long after you've gone. There must be something that you'd like to leave in the world for those people who hear these records, something that they'll get, will give meaning to your life after your life is over.

BD: Well, I'm not done yet! And I'm still doing it and I'm still not knowing why I'm doing it. Come on, I mean there's other things that I would really, you know, enjoy doing, besides playing and...

DH: Like what? I mean if any man can do what he wants to do, you can!

BD: Like what? Well, I mean, like become a doctor, you know, yeah I think a surgeon, you know, who can save somebody's life on the highway. I mean that's a man I'm gonna look up to, as being somebody with some talent.

DH: Do you think you could get into med school?

BD: (laughs) **Not to say now, that art is valueless. I think art could lead you to God, you know, but...**

DH: Is that it's purpose?

BD: I think so. I think that's everything's purpose. I mean if it's not doing that it's leading you the other way. It's not certainly leading you nowhere. It's bringing you somewhere. It's bringing you that way or this a-way.

DH: Well, if it expresses truth and beauty then it's leading you to God?

BD: Yeah? (laughs)

DH: Well, wouldn't you say?

BD: If it's expressing truth I'd say it's leading you to God and beauty also.

DH: I've always thought that those were the only two absolutes that there were.

BD: Well, beauty can be very very deceiving. It's not always of God.

DH: Would you elaborate on that a little bit?

BD: Well, beauty appeals to our eyes...

DH: And to our hearts?

BD: Our hearts are not good. If your heart's not good, what good does beauty do, that comes through your eyes, going down to your heart, which isn't good anyway?

DH: The beauty of a sunset?

BD: The beauty of the beast. The beauty of a sunset? Now, that's a very special kind of beauty.

DH: Well, how about the beauty of the natural world?

BD: Like the flowers?

DH: Yes, and the beasts... and the rain...

BD: All that is beautiful, That's God-given. I've spent a lot of time dealing with the man made beauty, so that sometimes the beauty of God's world has evaded me.

Heart Of Mine plays.

DH: On *Shot Of Love* is a song called *Lenny Bruce*, which you perform just at the piano and I love the song, because I loved Lenny Bruce and I was a great admirer of him, when he was alive and working, and of course since his death. But it occurred to me it's a long time since Lenny's gone, I think he went in the summer of 1967, I think it was. Why, after all these years this song about Lenny Bruce?

BD: You know, I have no idea!

DH: Did that song just come to you somewhere...?

BD: I wrote that song in five minutes! It is true, I rode with him once in a taxi cab. I thought it was a little strange after he died, that people made such a hero out of him. That when he was alive he couldn't even get a break. And certainly now, comedy is rank, dirty and vulgar and very unfunny and stupid, wishy-washy and the whole thing.

DH: Some people thought he was rank and dirty and vulgar...

BD: But he was doing this same sort of thing many years ago and maybe some people aren't realizing that there was Lenny Bruce, you know, who did this before and that is what happened to him. So these people can do what they're doing now. I don't know, you know.

DH: Lenny spent a lot of time bad mouthing the church, too. Well, from the point of view of organized churches. Is there a very big difference between the political structure of the various churches, no matter what the denomination might be and what the spirit is all about. Do you think that the Catholic Church, traditional Judaism, or any way that these religions are organized and filled with rites and rituals... Is that part of really of what you feel the truth of the spirit of God is all about?

BD: Well, that's a complicated question! I'm not an authority on Catholicism, you know. Ritual has really nothing to do with spiritual laws. However, if you do walk according to the law, all of the law, well, you'd be a pretty pure person and on a pretty high level. A person who could no doubt move mountains, if you walked according to the law, and most people can't walk according to the law, because it's so difficult, there are so many laws, that govern just about absolutely every area of your life.

DH: Maybe it takes more than one lifetime to get all of that. Is the fact that we come back again and again something that, I'm talking about reincarnation and the fact that maybe we spend more than one... let's say the Hindu way of believing that we get in touch with our own divinity and do walk according to the law, that it takes more than one life? Think that there's a possibility that that might be the way? And what's 60, 70, 80 years?

BD: It's not a whole lot of time, when you think you need another lifetime! (laughs) **You want another life time? How many do you want?**

DH: Well, you have to pay not to go through this thing twice! (laughs)

BD: That's it.. That's right! Well I figure if you can't learn it here, you can't learn it.

DH: Back to Lenny Bruce, and the fact that it's again yet another Bob Dylan song about, as you even say in the song, an outlaw. A lot of the stuff, a lot of the songs over the years, *Lenny Bruce*, *Outlaw Blues*, *Joey Gallo*, *Hurricane Carter*, or *Absolutely Sweet Marie*, "to live outside the law, you must live honest" (sic). A lot of outlaw imagery and outlaws in your work. What is it about "man as outlaw" that intrigues you so, you spend a lot of time on...

BD: Well, it's not, there again, I don't think it's anything conscious. I guess it has to do with where I grew up, admiring those type of heroes, Robin Hood, Jesse James... You know the person who always kicked against the oppression and was... had high moral standards. I don't know if these people I write about have high moral standards, I don't know if Robin Hood did, but you always assumed that they did.

DH: I assume that Joey Gallo did?

BD: In some kind of way you have to assume that he did, in some kind of area. It's like... I've never written a song about some rapists, you know. I think what I intend to do is just show the individualism of that certain type of breed, or certain type of person that would... that must do that. But there is some type of standard I have for whoever I'm writing about. I mean, it amazes me that I would write a song about Joey Gallo.

DH: But you did!

BD: Yeah!

DH: A long one too.

BD: Very long one. How long was that? About a half hour?

DH: About eleven minutes.

BD: Yeah, well I feel that, you know, if I didn't do it, who would? (laughs)**. But that's an old tradition! I think I picked that up in the folk tradition, when I was singing nothing but folk songs for years. There are many songs, a lot of Irish ballads, *Roddy McCorley*, names escape my mind at the moment...**

DH: There must be a hundred songs about Jesse James?

BD: ...Jesse James, Cole Younger, the US bandits, Billy The Kid,... and then, of course the English ballads had them and the Scottish ballads had them and the Irish ballads. I used to sing a lot of those songs and that just kind of carried over with me into the... whatever this special brand of music that I play now is, it just kind of carried over into that.

DH: People who know you and work with you told me in the last few days, when I was getting ready to talk to you, that they've never seen you more relaxed and content and...

BD: (laughs) **People always say that!**

DH: No, no. They really don't always say that, and I have a feeling that, you know, you are experiencing that. It's a real nice place to be now on this European tour. Otherwise I don't think we would be sitting here talking. You know, if you were preoccupied with a lotta things or felt out of synch with yourself, I think you probably are feeling pretty centered right now. As your friends were saying.

BD: Well, I know what I have to do and I'm just trying to do it, you know.

DH: The ego's got to play a big part in being a performer. Not everybody can go out there night after night, do what you do, and hear that applause and... How much of a part does that play in... I mean, do you feel a little bit like maybe you're hooked on the stage and on the celebritydom of it all?

BD: No. I don't mind the celebrity part of it.

DH: Could you be an anonymous person?

BD: I try to be an anonymous person, yeah. As far as the applause goes, I get just as much... sometimes it's applause, sometimes it's booing. You get used to it over years. I mean, I've been doing it for so long, whatever the applause is, it doesn't surprise me any more.

DH: But isn't it nicer when it's a big applause than... than one hand clapping?

BD: Yeah, it's a lot more comfortable.

DH: Isn't it nicer when the album, you know, is in the top ten instead of number... hanging around at forty-five or something?

BD: Well, it is and it isn't. Like *Slow Train* was a big album. *Saved* didn't have those kind of numbers but to me it was just as big an album.

DH: So it really matters little to you, the acceptance or the rejection on the part of the record buyers?

BD: No, it doesn't. I'm fortunate that I'm in the position to release an album like *Saved* with a major record company so it would be available to the people who would like to buy it.

DH: Was there a time in your life in the past, when you'd be on the phone: "what did the album do this week? Or is the single... did it go from 8 to 4?" Was there a time when you really got off on that kind of stuff?

BD: Well, you always wanna know what's happening with your record, so the first few weeks, yeah, you'll call up and find out, you know, if it's selling or if it's not selling. Sure.

DH: Has the music business changed in the 15 years or so that you have been making records?

BD: Very much so.

DH: If you were on TV you'd've seen an expression on his face there, actual winds of pain shot through you!

BD: Yeah. Now this last record that we just did was a comfortable record for me to make, because of... you know Chuck? Chuck Plotkin? Well, we worked together on it. OK, up until then... Well, he made the record the way I want to make the record. He understood that. He wanted to make the record in the same way. But the record business is changed because – see, when I went in in what they call, I guess not even in the early days... it was in the sixties really, you went – everybody made records the same way as I did. No matter who you were, Beatles, Rolling Stones, The Animals, The Byrds...

DH: Maybe we should just explain to people that that means all the people who were on the record were in the studio, in the same room at the same time, playing at the same time...

BD: ...and they made the record. You were a group, you were somebody, before you went in and made the record. You were somebody.

DH: Earned the privilege of making a record?

BD: Yeah, yeah, you'd played around, you paid enough dues to make a record. Now, people don't wanna pay no more dues no more. They expect to make a record right away without anybody even hearing them and then you'll find a producer, they have so many producers now, they didn't have that many producers back then, the producer was what they called the A&R man. Now you have all these producers who are in themselves stars. And it's their record. I don't think of myself as being told, you know, what to do all the time, you know.

DH: Are you on one side of the gun control issue or another? Do you think that this business of all the guns we have in America... I notice here in London, the policemen don't even have guns on their hips, you know, they don't carry weapons.

BD: But they have a much lower crime rate over here too. Well, you can't change the States in that kind of way. It's too many people. It didn't get off on the right start... You know the United States is like gun crazy, always has been gun crazy, you know. White man used to shoot the Indians with guns. Guns have been a great part of America's past. So, there's nothing you can do about it. The gun is just something which America has got, you know, lives with. I don't think gun control is making any difference at all. Just make it harder for people who need to be protected.

DH: And you quoted him in a *Playboy* interview a few years ago,... You said Henry Miller said that the role of an artist is to inoculate the world with disillusion.

BD: Yeah.

DH: Is that what you try to do with your work?

BD: No. I don't consciously try to inoculate anybody, you know. I just have to hope there's some kind of way this music that I've always played is a healing kind of music. I mean if it isn't I don't wanna do it. Because there's enough stuff, so-called music, out there, which is sick music. It's just sick. It's made by sick people and it's played to sick people to further a whole world of sickness. Now, that's not only true of music, this is true in film industry, it's true in the magazine industry. Certainly a lot of it on the television, bill-board signs. You know it caters to people's sickness. There's a lot of that. And if I can't do something that is telling people or... hoping anyway that.. whatever their sickness is, and we're all sick, whatever it is, you can be healed and well and set straight. Well if I can't do that, I'd as soon be on a boat, you know I'd as soon be off, you know, hiking through the woods.

DH: There's a song on *Shot Of Love*, *Every Grain Of Sand*, which is about as healing a song as I ever heard from you. It's a beautiful, beautiful song.

BD: Oh, yeah, I wrote that last summer.

DH: Is that what you mean by hopefully healing music?

BD: I would hope so.

Every Grain Of Sand plays.

DH: Well, Bob, is there anything you would like to tell the vast radio audience out there?

BD: I think they know just about anything that I've got to tell them. I think they know it.

13 July 1981
Press Conference, Kurhaus Hotel, Travemünde, West Germany

Source: *Endless Road*

THE TRAVEMÜNDE PRESS CONFERENCE
by Patrick J. Webster

On July 13th, 1981, in the banqueting room of the Kurhaushotel, Travemünde, Bob Dylan held a rare press conference.

It was a hastily organised affair, Dylan had just seen a completely fabricated "interview" of him in a Danish newspaper, in which he was supposed to have talked about John Lennon's death. Hence, wanting to set the record straight, that afternoon a conference was arranged.

About twenty journalists headed for Travemünde, a small town on the Baltic coast near Lübeck in West Germany, Dylan's base for the Bad Segeberg concerts.

The conference began just before midnight and lasted for some one and a half hours. For the record Dylan was dressed in a black polo shirt, white jeans, dark sunglasses, and a red and yellow striped wool cap, which he is reported to have fingered nervously throughout.

A tape of the conference did emerge and passed into circulation among Dylan collectors. However it was only sixty minutes long and in very poor sound quality.

In terms of its sound quality, on a scale of one to ten the tape would barely register one! But something can be gathered from it. What follows then is a transcript of those parts of the tape that are possible to decipher. It should be stressed that this transcript lays no claim to being a final version, and probably only includes one half of the material on the tape. Should any reader be able to hear more or to make improvements please contact the writer through *Endless Road*.

Also included are extracts from various press reports of the conference in Germany including questions and answers either not on the tape or not decipherable on the tape. It is possible to see that sometimes these quotes are not precisely what Dylan actually said, but the general sense is more or less accurate. (Some license has been taken in the placing of these quotes, as it wasn't possible to always be sure of their exact place in the conference. I've tried to place them where they make the most sense.)

The whole atmosphere is very relaxed, sprinkled with good humour, in fact much like the conferences in California in 1965. In truth Dylan's comments are seldom very startling. He seems somewhat guarded about Lennon's death and the fears it might have made in him. The comment about "*Self Portrait*" is fairly outrageous, but was Dylan really being serious? His faith in Christianity seemed as committed as ever, (the King of Kings, Lord of Lords quote) even though the concert comments had been very much toned down in 1981. There is also the revelation that he likes Polka Band music! (But anyone interested should read Toby Thomson's book Page 33 about the radio stations in Minnesota to understand this.) Dylan is very complimentary about Michael Wiehe, the singer he had seen on television the night before, and so on.

Since the mid sixties, apart from the abortive conferences at the Isle of Wight in 1969 and Tokyo in 1978 (and it should also probably be mentioned the Santa Monica interviews in January, 1978 and a kind of mini-press conference back stage at the Fox Warfield theatre in November, 1980), Dylan press conferences have been few and far between. This one at Travemünde is the only major one.

So, in the hope that even in an incomplete form it may be of some use, a transcript is presented here.

(Many thanks to Harald Muller for the patient, meticulous work in translating some of the German newspaper reports.)
Muller

Q: Did anybody actually ask you about John Lennon's death?
BD: No, they didn't ask me anything...
Q: They made the whole thing up?
BD: Yes. they made it all up.
Q: But did anybody beside that Danish journalist talk to you about the death of John Lennon?
BD: No, nobody ever really asked about that.
Q: But will you talk about that?
BD: ...I don't know, you know, what can you say? He was actually killed by someone who supposedly loved him. But what kind of love is that?... That was hero worship in a mad kind of way.
Q: Did that scare you?
BD: Well, no... because I don't write those kind of songs John Lennon wrote. I never wrote those kind of songs... "*Imagine*". I never liked that song, I mean I know it was a good song... he wrote one song, "*Mother*" 'Mother you had me, I had you', that's a very personal kind of song... It hits somebody in a special kind of way... I can't even relate to it.
Q: Do you still like to play the old stuff?
BD: I don't know what we'll play tomorrow night, but we could play just about anything. Some nights we play... you gotta kind of feel out the crowd, you know...
Q: Would you play more the newer songs or the older songs over here in Germany?
BD: Well, we've made a new record in the States, so we're gonna be playing some of those songs, and we'll be playing songs from ten years ago, eighteen years ago, we'll be playing songs from most of the albums.
Q: So 50% of your programme will be old songs?
BD: What do you consider old songs? How old do they have to be to be old songs?
Q: I would say five years.
BD: I don't know...

...sure, I guess you call it the devil on earth.
Q: How do you recognise him? (The Devil)
BD: How do you recognise him? Well he's transparent, isn't he? (Laughter)
Q: [Undecipherable question about "*Self Portrait*"]
BD: Well that was a joke, that album was put out at a time I didn't like the attention I was getting. I never did want attention. At that time I was getting the wrong kind of attention for things I hadn't done. So we released that album to get people off my back, so they would not like me anymore, that's the reason the album was put out, so people would stop buying my records, and they did. (Dylan laughs at this.)

...the cowboy myth in America has gone...
Q: There's a former star from Hollywood called Ronald Reagan.
BD: Oh that cowboy! (Laughter.)

Q: Do you know Robert Shelton?
BD: Yeah, he's writing a book on me...
Q: Do you feel flattered?
BD: Well...
Q: Do you still know Joan Baez?
BD: Who? (Laughter). **Someone said she was at a show we did in Paris, she was in the crowd, but she didn't come back to say hello. I felt bad about that.**

Q: Do you still see yourself as a protest singer?
BD: No.
Q: But isn't it necessary in today's world, to think about the peace and disarmament movement.
BD: Well, nuclear arms, nuclear disarmament... disarm all nuclear weapons... there's gonna be a battle anyway. The way I feel is that people who want war will fight war whether it's nuclear war or whatever, with spears and other weapons...
Q: Is there any truth in the rumour that you're going to join the peace concert that is going to be held at the end of the peace march from Copenhagen to Paris?
BD: People have jobs to do. everybody has a job, everybody has work, that's cool.

BD: Oh yeah, for sure yeah, a few years ago... Jesus did appear to me and is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and he did die on the cross for all mankind.
Q: How did he appear to you. I mean what did you do at this time in the winter of '79?
BD: Do you really want to know? Mm, well I don't know, I've told the story so many times... Re-born, that's what they call it. re-born. It's pretty scary to think about, so I don't think about it too much... I'm not preaching, ...it's spiritual, it's not complicated.

Q: How does it feel playing with these musicians?
BD: Well this band is the best band I've ever played with, I can get any sound.
Q: Better than the Band?
BD: ...We can do more things than I could do with the Band, this is more rock orientated.
Q: Could you talk a little about the new album, what kind of songs will there be on it?
BD: Well, we'll be playing a bunch of them tomorrow night... I don't know what I can say about it?
Q: Compared to, let's say, the last two.
BD: I think these three albums will give a broader picture...
Q: Do you think it will blur the picture or establish your image as a christian musician?
BD: I've no idea.

BD: ...I like French music, I like French melodies... Charles Aznavour type of melodies.
Q: Do you know any German music?
BD: I know polka, polka band music. I know it very well. I grew up with it. Absolutely... I just love it, most people don't understand it.

Q: Your film "*Renaldo & Clara*", was a financial disaster, wasn't it?
BD: The press didn't like it, nobody liked it at all...
Q: Most people couldn't understand it... They showed it on TV and some special cinemas... I read this Ratso book, I felt when I read it, I could understand more about you, your film. It was kind of inside you and other people... Do you have any plans for a new film?
BD: No, no plans. Lots of American films don't come to grips... you have to go to clubs and bars where it is... Small towns where people who are never going to be in a movie... But it costs so much to produce and make...
Q: In the past your songs were covered by a lot of other musicians. Is it important for you that still today other musicians play your songs?
BD: That's a good question. I should have thought about it, but if Earth Wind & Fire play "*Saved*" that would be fine.
Q: Today, who plays the old songs by Bob Dylan the best?

BD: There's a guy in Oslo that sings my songs better than me. Incredible! I don't know the guy, I'd have had him come and play the show tomorrow night. (Laughter) **He's quite good.**

Q: (He's Norwegian.) What kind of songs does he play, out of which period?

BD: He plays "*Baby Blue*" and "*All Along the Watchtower*", couldn't believe it. It wasn't on a record, it was on my television.

Q: Was he copying you, that means playing the same style that you did, or was he doing something different, for example like Jimi Hendrix with "*All Along the Watchtower*"?

BD: Yeah, no, his heart and soul were in it.

Q: Do you like the versions of Manfred Mann?

BD: Yeah, those are okay... even better than Peter, Paul & Mary!

Q: When you're rehearsing new musicians you don't write down the chords do you, they just have to follow you?

BD: Well, it's easy to play with me, I mean I only play three chords.

Q: Although some musicians have problems following your songs... still when there are only three chords, it's your kind of style of playing.

BD: Oh yeah, I hear my things on other people's records and I know what they're picking up. Stuff I did, like in the late sixties... very common now.

Q: They just have to follow you?

BD: You could play with me. it's very easy to play with me.

Q: What do you think has changed in your lifestyle?

BD: My lifestyle? Well, let's see. I think probably I'm probably the same, doing the same things, going to the same places, nothing more. Life doesn't really change, the scenery changes.

BD: ...Well, with Jesus, you're talking about a supernatural things. It goes beyond... Most people, their concept of God. well God created the earth and sat on the mountains... There are so many religions around, some religions say you have many lives. Some religions say you come back again. Other religions say just sit there and stare at the wall and you'll find total peace. So what? Jesus is not a religion, is not a religion. I could talk about it for days and days...

Q: Who would you like to write a song with?

BD: I don't know. I should know, maybe with Stevie Wonder.

Q: And is there anybody you'd like to record with?

BD: Anybody I'd like to record with, a real person? Mm, maybe one time make a record with Joan Baez. I don't know if she'll ever talk to me again. (Laughter)

Q: How can people relate to you?

BD: In my music I guess. That music comes through me. it just comes you know.

Q: It's you playing it.

BD: Yeah, it's me playing it, it's a big part of me. It's a special part and it's special music too...

Q: But it could come through somebody else?

BD: I can't answer that.

Q: Could you imagine anybody else who could write these songs?

BD: Paul Simon writes great songs. George Harrison great songs, a lot of people, Eric Clapton produces wonderful music.

Q: Is Dylan Thomas still your favourite poet?
BD: He wrote some wonderful poems.

Q: Who's your favourite philosopher?
BD: I don't know.

Q: Once again, who's your favourite philosopher?
BD: Mm, the guy who wrote *Thus spoke... someone*, he's good.
Q: Nietzsche?
BD: Yes, I like him.

20 & 21 July 1981
Neil Spencer Interview, Munich, Germany

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 873-878.

Neil Spencer, editor of *New Musical Express*, interviewed Dylan briefly backstage after the first of two shows in Munich on July 20th and then, at greater length the following afternoon in Dylan's fourth-floor hotel suite. The two sessions were published together in the New Musical Express on August 15th 1981 under the title

The Diamond Voice Within

IN THE EMPTY LOT backstage in the athlete's changing area, Bert, a Dutch Dylanologist from *Oor* magazine, and I are lined up for our brief audiences with Dylan.

"Oh God," comes the unmistakable voice through the open door of the dressing room as an aide reminds him of our impending presence and we catch a glimpse of Dylan pulling on a sock. A minute later and we're shaking hands with the maestro, who seems as nervous as we are, with the air of a man slowly exhaling the potent adrenalin charge of two hours' onstage at the hub of 7,000 people's attention.

His stage threads – black trousers, the satin bomber jacket with its curious golden design – lie limply across a chair, Dylan now wearing a sloppy white sweatshirt, jeans and training shoes. He looks beefier and stronger than all those "wiry little cat" descriptions of history suggest, more sporty; the scene seems almost collegiate. The eyes are large, washed out electric blue, and riveting, still topped by the great burst of locks.

We chat about the show, which Dylan didn't like – **"you couldn't hear anything and the audience was kinda strange, you should have been at last night's show"** – and about press reaction to the show. Dylan seems to feel the papers give him a hard time whatever he does with the old songs: **"You just can't win."**

I remark that *Maggie's Farm* is a popular song in Britain these days, and Dylan and bassman, who's also present, exchange blank looks before the bassie tumbles "Maggie Thatcher" and they break into laughter, me wondering about the slow association after a week playing down on the farm itself.

He'd heard about The Specials' version but wasn't familiar with it. He mumbles something about **"punk waves and new waves"** as he packs his stuff, before offering **"I like George's song."**

George?

"Boy, George's song is great." Oh, George Harrison. (It transpires the two spent some time together on Dylan's stay, inspiring him to play *Here Comes The Sun* at one Earl's Court gig. One wonders whether they discussed Monty Python's *Life Of Brian*, (which Harrison financed). I mumble something about whether he thinks the old songs seem to get new meanings in the light of changing times and his new beliefs, and Dylan fixes me with a piercing look.

BD: I'm different, the songs are the same. The songs don't mean that much to me actually, I wrote them and I sing them...

NS: There's nothing from *Desire* or *Street Legal* though...

BD: We could do a completely different set with completely different songs. They're all old songs, even the ones from *Slow Train* are old now. I tell you what though, I feel very strongly about this show. I feel it has something to offer. No-one else does this show, not Bruce Springsteen or anyone.

NS: Was he surprised at the amount of hostility the conversion to Christianity had brought?

BD: Not surprised at all. I'm just surprised to hear the applause every time I play. I appreciate that. You can feel everything that comes off an audience... little individual things, that are going on. It's a very instant thing.

Outside the tour bus is ticking over and filling up with musicians and road crew, and one of the gospel quartet is doing a soft shoe shuffle in the rain. Tomorrow, comes the word, is a proper interview, at the hotel Maybe.

I WENT TO SEE THE GYPSY STAYING IN A BIG HOTEL in the centre of the town, where the occasional appearance of a denim clad roadie provides colorful contrast to the assembled grey ranks of German businessmen. Pre-match nerves vanish as I trot out onto the plush turf of Dylan's fourth floor suite. To one side, a TV flickers without sound. Dylan wanders in wearing a black leather jacket and white jeans and we start committing words to the tape. He talks slowly, his speaking voice deeper than you expect from his singing, and not at all like sand and glue. The replies come carefully considered and usually as evasive and non-committal as we've come to expect over the years.

NS: Someone told me you'd been working with Smokey Robinson. Is that right?

BD: No... we were doing a session, along with Ringo and Willy, and he was rehearsing across the street with his new band, a new show. I'd seen him on the street going it so we went out on a break and said hello.

NS: You didn't work with him?

BD: No.

NS: Are you pleased with the new album?

BD: The last time I heard it I was. I haven't heard it since I left for Chicago. Which was the beginning of June. I was satisfied enough to leave town.

NS: The sound is a lot rawer. A much looser sound.

BD: Well, I had more control over this record... That's the type of record I like to make. I just haven't been able to make them.

NS: Why's that?

BD: Well, usually I've been working quickly in the studio and for one reason or another I just get locked into whoever's producing, their sound, and I just wanna do it and get it over with.

NS: Who produced this one?

BD: Chuck (Plotkin) **and myself produced it. Bumps Blackwell did Shot Of Love with me, which he helped with a great deal. You remember him?**

NS: No, who's that?

BD: Bumps did all the early Little Richard records and Don and Dewey records, he handled all the Speciality records.

NS: That's the rockiest track right? A lot of the rest is bluesy, or some of it has a reggae lilt. Do you still like reggae?

BD: There's not much difference between country, and reggae when you take away the bass and drums; they're very similar.

NS: You've always seemed to have one foot in rock n' roll, Little Richard and that, and the other in the blues, folk, country traditions...

BD: Well, I love it all, whatever might be popular at the moment.

NS: Do you still do everything in a couple of takes?

BD: On this album we did.

NS: I'd heard you like to work in a very spontaneous way.

BD: With this new band we can usually work very quickly with a new tune.

NS: It is nearer your 'Mercurial- Sound' with this band?

BD: Yeah... it's a little hard to reproduce that on stage of course. The only thing we were really able to do that was with The Band on those *Bob Dylan And The Band* tours in the '60s. Because the sound back then was so raw and primitive the sound systems wouldn't give us anything else. And when The Beatles played you could never hear The Beatles. Even the Stones' people were screaming and there wasn't much sound. You could never hear what they were doing.

NS: I have to ask you about the Lenny Bruce song (*Lenny Bruce Is Dead*) You said it was very spontaneous.

BD: That was a really quick song for me to write. I wrote that in about five minutes... I didn't even know why I was writing it, it just naturally came out. I wasn't, you know meditating on Lenny Bruce before I wrote it.

NS: It's a very compassionate song.

BD: It is.

NS: It is in the tradition of your songs about folk heroes like *Hurricane*, *George Jackson*...

BD: I thought *Joey* was a good song. I know no one said much about it, I thought it was one of those songs that came off and you didn't hear that much about it.

NS: Looking at the other songs on the album there are a lot of criticisms of people in high places. Would you say that's true?

BD: (Laughs) **Yeah that's always true I guess... I don't really know, y'know. I'm not sure it hangs together as a concept because there were some real songs on this album that we recorded, a couple of really long songs, like there was one I did – do you remember *Visions Of Johanna*?**

NS: Sure...

BD: Well, there was one like that. I'd never done anything like it before. It's got that same kind of thing to it. It seems to be very sensitive and gentle on one level, then on another level the lyrics aren't sensitive and gentle at all. We left that off the album. We left another thing off the album which is quite different to anything I wrote, that I think just in a musical kind of way you'd like to hear. And in a lyric content-way it's interesting. The way the story line changes from third person to first person and that person becomes you, then these people are there and they're not there. And then the time goes way back and then it's brought up to the present And I thought it was really effective, but that again is a long song and when I came down to putting the songs on the album we had to cut some, so we cut those. Now what we have left is an album which seems to make its kind of general statement, but it's too soon to say what that general statement is.

NS: There's a reference to "*The Politics Of Sin*" on *Dead Man*.

BD: Yeah, well that's what sin is, politics. It just came to me when I was writing that's the way it is... the diplomacy of sin. The way they take sin and put it in front of people... the way that they say this is good and that's bad, you can do this and you can't do that, the way sin is taken and split up and categorised and put on different levels so it becomes more of a structure of sin, or, "*These Sins are big ones these are little ones, these can hurt this person, these can hurt you, this is bad for this reason and that is bad for another reason.*" The politics of sin; that's what I think of it.

NS: Do you still feel politics is part of the illusion?

BD: I've never really been into politics, mostly I guess because of the world of politics. The people who are into politics as a profession, you know, it's... the art of politics hasn't changed much over the years. Were there politics in Roman Times? And are there politics in Communist countries? I'm sure there are.

NS: You feel what the world's facing is more of a spiritual crisis?

BD: Oh Yeah, definitely. Definitely. People don't know who the enemy is. They think the enemy is something they can see, and the reality of the enemy is a spiritual being they can't see, and it influences all they *can* see and they don't go to the top, the end line of the real enemy – like the enemy who's controlling who you think who's your enemy.

NS: Who's that?

BD: What, who you think your enemy is?

NS: Yes.

BD: You would think the enemy is someone you can strike at and that would solve the problem, but the real enemy is the Devil. That's the real enemy, but he tends to shade himself and hide himself and put it into people's minds that he's really not there and he's really not so bad and that he's got a lot of good things to offer too. So there's like this conflict going, to blind the minds of men.

NS: A conflict in all of us?

BD: Yeah, he puts that conflict there, without him there'd be no conflict.

NS: Maybe the struggle is necessary?

BD: Well that's a whole other subject... yes, I've heard that said too.

NS: When you said. "*Strengthen the things that remain*" (from *When You Gonna Wake Up*) what things were you thinking of?

BD: Well the things that remain would be the basic qualities that don't change, the values that still do exist. It says in The Bible, "*Resist not evil, but overcome evil with good*". And the values that can overcome evil are the ones to strengthen.

NS: People feel that fighting oppression is more important than spiritual interests.

BD: That's wrong. The struggle against oppression and injustice is always going to be there, but the Devil himself is the one who creates it. You can come to know yourself but you need help in doing it. The only one who can overcome all that is The Great Creator himself. If you can get His help you can overcome it. To do that you must know something about the nature of The Creator. What Jesus does for an ignorant man like myself is to make the characteristics and qualities of God more believable to me, 'cause I can't beat The Devil. Only God can. He already has. Satan's working everywhere. You're faced with him constantly. If you can't see him he's inside you making you feel a certain way. He's feeding you envy and jealousy, he's feeding you oppression, hatred...

NS: Do you feel the only way to know the Creator is through Christ?

BD: I feel the only way... let me see. Of course you can look on the desert and wake up to the sun and the sand and the beauty of the stars and know there's a higher being and worship that Creator. But being thrown into the cities you're faced more with man than with God. We're dealing here with man y'know, and in order to know where man's at you have to know what God would do if he was man. I'm trying to explain it to you in intellectual mental terms, when it actually is more of a spiritual understanding than something which is open to debate.

NS: You can't teach people things they don't experience for themselves...

BD: Most people think that if God became a man he would go up on a mountain and raise his sword and show his anger and his wrath or his love and compassion in one blow. And that's who people expected the Messiah to be – someone to set things straight, and here comes a Messiah who doesn't measure up to those characteristics and it causes a lot of problems.

NS: Someone who put the responsibility back on us?

BD: Right.

NS: From your songs like *Dead Man* and *When He Returns* it's obvious you believe The Second Coming is likely in our lifetimes.

BD: Possibly. Possibly at any moment. It could be in our lifetimes. It could be a long time. This earth supposedly has a certain number of years which I think is 7,000 years, 7,000 or 6,000. We're in the last cycle of it now. Going back to the First Century there's like 3,000 years before that and 4,000 after it, one of the two, the last thousand would be

the millennium years. I think that everything that's happened is like a preview of what's going to happen.

NS: How strict is your interpretation of Christianity? The Original Christians seemed to have a different faith and belief that have got lost.

BD: I'm not much of a historian about Christianity. I know it's been changed over the years but I go strictly according to the Gospels.

NS: Have you seen the Gnostic Gospels?

BD: Some place I have. I don't recall too much about them but I've seen them.

NS: Are you going to make any more movies?

BD: If we can get a short outline we will, I'd like to.

NS: *Renaldo And Clara* was very symbolist, and your songs on *Street Legal* were full of Tarot imagery. Have those interests now left you?

BD: Those particular interests have, yes.

NS: Do you now think that 'occult' interests like the Tarot are misleading?

BD: I don't know. I didn't get into the Tarot Cards all that deeply. I do think they're misleading for people though. You're fixed on something which keeps a hold on you. If you can't or don't understand why you're feeling this way at that moment, with those cards you come up with a comfortable feeling that doesn't have any necessary value.

NS: You were also interested in Judaism at one point. You visited Israel and the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Do you feel that your interests at that time are compatible with your present beliefs?

BD: There's really no difference between any of it in my mind. Some people say they're Jews and they never go to a Synagogue or anything. I know some gangsters who say they're Jews. I don't know what that's got to do with anything. Judaism is really the Laws of Moses. If you follow the Laws of Moses you're automatically a Jew I would think.

NS: You've always had a strong religious theme in your songs even before you became a Christian.

BD: (Angrily) **I don't really want to walk around with a sign on me saying 'Christian'.**

NS: It might appear that way to a lot of people.

BD: Yeah, but a lot of people wanna hang a sign on you for whatever. It's like Mick Jagger said. "They wanna hang a sign on you".

NS: In a *Playboy* interview three years ago you said you agreed with Henry Miller's saying that "*the purpose of the artist is to inoculate the world with disillusionment*". Do you still agree with that?

BD: (Laughs)**. That's pretty good for Henry Miller... maybe that would be good for what he wanted to do. Maybe that's the purpose of his art.**

NS: Not yours?

BD: Well, what I do is more of an immediate thing; to stand up on stage and sing – you get it back immediately. It's not like writing a book or even making a record. And with a movie – it's so difficult to get anything back working or a movie, you never know what you're doing and the results don't come in until usually years afterwards. What I do is so immediate it changes the nature, the concept of art to me. I don't know what it is. It's too immediate. It's like the man who made that painting there (points to a painting on wall of hotel room) **has no idea we're sitting here now looking at it or not looking at it or anything... performing is more like a stage play.**

NS: You haven't painted your masterpiece yet, then.

BD: No. I don't know if I ever will, I've given up thinking about it though.

22 July 1981
Andreas Forst Street Interview, ORF-TV Channel 2, Kärtnerstrasse, Wien, Austria

Source: *Circulating Tape*

The recording is a mess – lots of street noise, lady fans (L1, L2…) asking for autographs and spelling their names(!) to Dylan. Andreas Forst manages to asks a couple of his questions:

AF: Hi, Mr Dylan
BD: (talking to a fan in the background)
AF: Did you like the concert yesterday?
BD: (readying to sign another autograph) **Okay.**
AF: Did you like the Viennese crowd?
L1: I don't have it, can you write to Abbie?
BD: Sure can.
L2: (to L1) Speak English.
BD: If I can… a little bit
L2: (spelling her name) B-R-O-T-K-E
BD: Okay.
L2: (unintelligible)
BD: Oh, where does she live?
L2: (unintelligible)
BD: Oh, yes? Okay. (taking another piece of paper to sign) **To who? Yeah?**
L3: (unintelligible)
BD: I've signed it all right here.
L3: Thank you very much.
BD: So. No problem
AF: Will you continue the next year with concerts?
BD: (disinterested) **Yeah.**
AF: Will you continue to be on the road?
BD: Oh, yeah. We'll be on the road next year.
AF: Did you like your concert in Vienna? It was your first concert…
BD: I was a little bit tired, but it sounded pretty good, yeah.
AF: Are you going to ????????
BD: I'd like to do that. I haven't been invited, though.
AF: 'Cause we are broadcasting from ???????? and a lot of people write us to say they really like to see you.
BD: Oh!
AF: Is it possible that…
BD: Maybe. Sure.
AF: Is it possible: Bob Dylan in Moscow? To play in Moscow?
BD: Sounds quite likely to me.
AF: Thank you very much
BD: Thank you
AF: Thank you, Bob Dylan.

15 March 1982
Induction to Songwriters' Hall Of Fame & Jane Hansen Interview
Hilton Hotel, New York City, New York

Source: *Circulating Tape*

Acceptance Speech:

BD: I think it is pretty amazing, really, 'cause I can't read or write a note of music. I never could and I will never be able to, so… thank you.

Jane Hansen Interview

BD: It's thrilling. Just thrilling. It's like being in the Baseball Hall of Fame. I've always wanted to be in there, so I guess this is the closest thing to it.

27 March 1983
Comments on John Hammond,
Columbia (Studio) Offices, New York City, New York

Source: *Circulating Tape*

BD: The fact that John had offered me the contract and an opportunity to record, that was just, uh, you know, a phenomenal thing back then.

5 July 1983
Martin Killer Interview, New Your City

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 251-255.

On July 5th, whilst finishing the final production of *Infidels*, Dylan is interviewed by Martin Keller of the *Minneapolis City Pages*. The interview was widely syndicated; this version was published in the New Musical Express on August 6th 1983.

RELIGION TODAY BONDAGE TOMORROW

Bob Dylan goes in search of Robert Zimmerman while recording his new LP in New York. Martin Keller prompts him to rediscover himself in this exclusive interview.

In the early morning hours over the Independence Day weekend, Bob Dylan stands in a friends room at the Empire Hotel, anxiously listening to a ghetto blaster playing a new song from his forthcoming album. Dylan's nasal tones cut through the sounds from the busy New York street below. The lyrics fall in their usual unpredictable cadence.

The words have an even more ironically charged air as darkness begins to lift in an East window. "They say that patriotism is the last refuge to which a scoundrel clings," Dylan croons. "Steal a little and they'll throw you in jail / Steal a lot and they make you a king / There's only one step down from here baby / And it's called the land of permanent bliss / What's a sweetheart like you doing in a dump like this?"

"I guess that's a Byronesque ballad," Dylan says jokingly when the cut *Sweetheart Like You* ends. **"Sort of like Childe Harold in Babylon or Elizabethan rhythm and blues".**

Dylan's good humor at four in the morning is matched by his friendly and unusually receptive manner. A month of prodigious mixing and two months of recording shows in his tired face, especially around the eyes. Thirty songs were recorded for the upcoming and, as yet, untitled LP. Sixteen of them are new Dylan compositions, and one of the 14 tunes by others, Willie Nelson's *Angels Flying Too Close To The Ground*, may or may not end up on the finished product. **"All that's left to do is the song sequencing, and then we'll slip it into a sleeve",** Dylan says. The record should be out by September, but he is undecided about touring this year. He walks across the room in thick motorcycle boots worn over black slacks, his white cotton shirt open to the last button, exposing his cocoa tan torso.

Dylan plays another new song that will be on the LP called *Man Of Peace*. He calls the tune a **"slow drag blues".** Driven by the rhythm section of reggae's, and now rock's, most sought-after sidesmen, drummer Sly Dunbar and bassist Robbie Shakespeare, *Man Of Peace* builds to a fierce rock climax.

Guitarist Mick Taylor fleshes out the lead track, piling up tension and pressure. Taylor's taut figures are overshadowed only by Dylan's crucial lyrics. *Man Of Peace* is grounded in familiar Dylan turf, a land where things are not what they seem. The song calls to mind the Thomas Mann novella, *Mario And The Magician*, where manipulation of people and events occurs even under the most attractive circumstances and good intentions. Yet such appearances are wormy with illusions and deceptions. They could harbor fascism; they could kindle evil. They might even mask art and freedom.

Like the sulphur and smoke that lingers after a fourth of July celebration, questions about Dylan's beliefs have been hanging in the atmosphere ever since his conversion. Many will try to sniff out answers on the new record. **"People want to know where I'm at",** Dylan says caustically, **"Because they don't know where they're at."**

Dylan often leaves and enters the room next door, where phones are ringing and people are talking. Soon he returns and we continue.

MK: What role did Mark Knopfler play on this album?

BD: This is the easiest record I ever made because of Mark. He understood the songs so well. Of course he's a songwriter himself, you know, and one of the most sensitive guitar players around. He encouraged me to go to the studio when I didn't feel like it, when I'd rather have been someplace else. Actually we are soul mates. As far as guitar playing goes he never steps all over with fancy licks. Yeah, Mark was incredible. He helped make this record in a thousand ways, not only musically, which in itself would have been enough. Brilliant guy, I can't say enough about him.

MK: Are you satisfied with most of the records you make?

BD: No, no, it's unbearable to hear some of them, for me. I hear them, and I want to shut them off. The sound of my own voice... I can't get used to it, never have gotten used to it. Makes you wanna hide... I like all my records when I make them. It depends on different times. It's not like I sit around and listen to Bob Dylan stuff. I like *Freewheelin'*, and I like my first album. *Shot Of Love* is my favorite, actually.

MK: Who are your favorite contemporary singers?

BD: Oh, let me see, Joe Cocker, I suppose. Graham Nash can sing. Van Morrison's fantastic. And so is Stevie Wonder, but of all of them, Joe's the greatest.

MK: How has music changed recently?

BD: You know the French say everything changes but stays the same. Actually it has become soulless and commercial. Lot of it is played with drum machines and synthesizers. Personally, I'd rather hear an orchestra and a real drummer. Machines don't have the depth of the human heart. There just isn't anyone home.

MK: A lot of rock n' roll stars are being backed by big corporations for their tours. Are you ever going to do anything like that?

BD: When The Clash do it, maybe, I'll think about it.

MK: There's a refrain in *Man Of Peace* that says "*Sometimes Satan comes as a man of peace*". People hearing that may take it to mean you are still involved in Christianity.

BD: So what if they say that?

MK: I'm familiar with expression in a religious context.

BD: You can turn anything into a religious context. Religion is a dirty word. It doesn't mean anything. Coca Cola is a religion. Oil and steel are a religion. In the name of religion, people have been raped, killed and defiled. Today's religion is tomorrow's bondage.

MK: Are there political songs on this record?

BD: I don't write political songs. Political songs are slogans. I don't even know the definition of politics. At one time it could have been a good thing, but right now it's all part of that so-called corruptible crown. Like, you know, the law is a good thing until it's used against the innocent. Politics could be useful if it was used for good purposes. For instance, like feeding the hungry and taking care of the orphans. But it's not. It's like the snake with it's tail in it's mouth. A merry-go-round of sin. Latin America, for example, this is a political issue. All you hear about are US interests in Latin America. But what are those interests? You can't find out. Show me an honest politician, and I'll show you a sanctified whore. You know that old story about the murderer who kills the judge and puts on his robe. But he's still a murderer. Corruption doesn't die, men die.

MK: Is our legacy always going to continue to be war after war?

BD: You know the toy manufacturers that make guns and tanks for small children? They are as much to be held responsible for death and destruction of the planet as any important arms manufacturer. They're just doing it for little people. They're the ones that start the assembly line of death. They light the match. In the end there's a supreme judge they'll have to answer to for this. Don't matter how expensive their suit is or how big their playhouses are. Of course, they'll plead ignorance, "Well, I never knew about it," they'll say. But they won't get off so easy, and there won't be no Nixon to pardon them.

MK: What about all we've been reading about your search for your so-called Jewish roots?

BD: My so-called Jewish roots are in Egypt. They went down there with Joseph, and they came back out with Moses, you know, the guy that killed the Egyptian, married an Ethiopian girl and brought the law down from the mountain. The same Moses whose staff turned into a serpent. The same person who killed 3,000 Hebrews for getting down, stripping off their clothes and dancing around a golden calf. These are my roots.

Jacob had four wives and 13 children, who fathered an entire people. Those are my roots too. Gideon, with a small army, defeating an army of thousands. Deborah, the prophetess. Esther the queen and many Canaanite women. Reuben slipping into his father's bed when his father wasn't there. These are my roots. Delilah tempting Sampson, killing him softly with her song. The mighty King David was an outlaw before he was a king, you know. He had to hide in caves and get his meals at back doors. The wonderful King Saul had a warrant out on him – a "no knock" search warrant. They wanted to cut his head off. John the Baptist could tell you more about it.

Roots man – we're talking about Jewish roots, you want to know more? Check upon Elijah the prophet. He could make rain. Isaiah the prophet, even Jeremiah, see if their brethren didn't want to bust their brains for telling it right like it is, yeah -these are my roots, I suppose. Am I looking for them? Well, I don't know. I ain't looking for them in synagogues with six pointed Egyptian stars shining down from every window, I can tell you that much. But you know, it's sleepy time down south.

MK: Do you believe in reincarnation?

BD: Yeah – I do. I don't think there are any new souls on earth. Caesar, Alexandra, Nebuchadnezzar, Baal, Nimrod. They've all been here time and time again. Spirit talks to flesh – flesh talks to spirit. But you never know which is which. I'm not seeking the truth – nor was I ever. I was born knowing the truth. Everybody is. Trouble is they get it knocked out of them before they can walk.

MK: What do you think about the current philosophy and modern trends?

BD: You turn a deaf ear to all that can save you while pursuing a wall, a strange mirage. Seeking freedom where freedom isn't, and both your feet are caught in a trap, and you're bleeding to death but you can't feel it, 'cause you're high on the drugs of illusion.

MK: I think that's what people look for in your work and what they'll be looking for on this upcoming record – whether you're still talking about those things and how you're talking about them.

BD: I hope so. But no one's gonna buy anything or talk about anything that they don't understand. My work is understood in the blood of the heart. That's what messes all these people up, trying to talk about it. 'Cause they can't talk about it. The most they can do is try to categorize it. They call it folk-rock or white rhythm and blues or country-punk or religious message music. And it means nothing. Most peoples sensibilities are determined by the newspaper they read this morning, whether it be the *New York Daily News* or the *Wall Street Journal*. It's all the same. They cut down trees to print them all. What's the difference. It's doing nothing to get you into the world to come. No small wonder everyone's walking around insane. That's why I like the Waylon Jennings song *I've Always Been Crazy But It Keeps Me From Going Insane*).

When you go into a department store to buy an umbrella, your mind is attacked by fictitious sound – The B52's, The Pretenders or somebody – and you kind of end up drifting in and out while the cash registers ring.

I don't remember that being the purpose of music. The purpose of music is to elevate the spirit and inspire. Not to help push some product down your throat. To those who care now where Bob Dylan is at, they should listen to *Shot Of Love* off the *Shot Of Love* album. It's my most perfect song. It defines where I am at spiritually, musically, romantically and whatever else. It shows where my sympathies lie. No need to wonder if I'm this or that. I'm not hiding anything. It's all there in that one song. That's all you can ask.

Late 1983
Robert Hilburn interview for Los Angeles Times

Source: *Los Angeles Times*, 30 October 1983, pp. U3-4.

BOB DYLAN AT 42-ROLLING DOWN HIGHWAY 61 AGAIN
By ROBERT HILBURN

The times are apparently changing again for Bob Dylan, who startled his fans three years by adopting an aggressive "born-again" Christian stance.

Dylan reportedly has spent much time recently at Chabad Lubavitch, a hard-line Hasidic Jewish center in Brooklyn. (**"They and the Rastas aren't that far apart."** Dylan has said.) He was also seen wearing a yarmulke and prayer shawl at his son Jesse's bar mitzvah in Jerusalem. And there is none of the proselytizing Christian doctrine of "*Slow Train Coming*" on his new album, "*Infidels*."

When asked if he still considers himself "born again," Dylan paused only briefly before responding:

"I don't think it (the issue) **is relevant right now. First of all 'born again' is a hype term. It's a media term that throws people into a corner and leaves them there. Whether people realize it or not. all these political and religious labels are irrelevant...**

"That ('born-again' period) **was all part of my experience. It had to happen. When I get involved in something, I get totally involved. I don't just play around on the fringes."**

Does Dylan, who was reared in the Jewish faith, regret anything from the "*Slow Train*" period?

"I don't particularly regret telling people how to get their souls saved," he said. **"I don't particularly regret any of that. Whoever was supposed to pick it up, picked it up.**

"But maybe the time for me to say that has just come and gone. Now it's time for me to do something else... It's like sometimes those things appear very quickly and disappear. Jesus himself only preached for three years."

Dylan can be intimidating. Even when he's not trying to turn away curious bystanders with icy indifference, his celebrity status and maverick reputation can be unsettling.

When he ordered an iced tea and a brandy, the waiter in the West Los Angeles restaurant was so flustered that he brought the rock legend brandy in the iced tea.

As he waited for the waiter to bring the right drinks. Dylan seemed anxious—like someone waiting for his name to be called in a dentist's office. By his standards. however, he was open and relaxed.

The man who once seemed to delight in confusing the public with vague, contradictory statements, is apparently now trying to present a clearer picture. He even phoned this reporter after the restaurant meeting to offer some additional thoughts.

"It was right to be vague (in early interviews) **because they were trying to dig a hole for you,"** he said on the phone. **"If you took it** (all the questions) **seriously and gave serious answers, you'd just get hurt. You had to respond in a way that wouldn't hurt you. The press was always battering me around—from the beginning. They just print anything. You can't take it seriously.**

"My son will tell me he read that I was at the Palace watching... Van Halen or someone and talking to this guy about his... dog or something. I don't know where they get all that stuff."

Dylan's impatient with people who believe everything they read. Rather than try to deny things, he seems to enjoy simply adding to the confusion of those people. His attitude is underscored by his reaction to one of the latest media tales about him.

A few papers have reported that Dylan has recorded an album of Hasidic music for a small independent label called Mitzvah Records. Efforts by Dylan representatives to track down the company have been fruitless.

When the report was mentioned. Dylan said mischievously, **"You can say I'm planning to make 20 records for them. Say, I'm going to make all my records from now on for them."**

But Dylan isn't joking about the new *"Infidels"* album. It is clearly an important work to him.

Dylan usually rushes into a studio and puts an album together in a week or two. On *"Infidels."* however, he spent nearly a month last spring in New York putting down the basic tracks.

Taking a break to get perspective, he went back into the studio there to pick: the songs that worked best together and ! to touch up a few of the tracks.

"Somehow, I figured I could always get away with just playing the songs live in the studio and leaving," he said. **"It got to the point where I felt people expected that from me. Besides, there was always pressure to be doing something else: go on tour or get it out on time.**

"But I decided (this time) **to take my time like other people do. The extra little bit of time helped. That's going to be my pattern from now on. I'm not going to release a record until I feel it is worked on properly."**

The result is likely to be his most acclaimed LP in more than a decade. Working with producer-guitarist Mark Knopfler (from Dire Straits) and an all-star band that includes reggae bassist Robbie Shakespeare and drummer Sly Dunbar. Dylan has come up with some of his most elegant and refined musical textures.

But ideas—not textures—are what have made Dylan the most distinguished songwriter of the rock era. And ideas are hurled at you in the album like pieces of a large, compelling puzzle.

There are moments of romantic tenderness in *"Infidels,"* but the heart of album is a series of critical yet compassionate looks at the state of the nation. On key tunes, in fact, Dylan is again rolling down Highway 61—mirroring, mocking and cajoling a citizenry that seems caught up these days in a strange mix of apathy and alarm.

The difficult thing in assessing new Dylan collections is that some people consider a disappointment anything that doesn't generate the social sparks of his classic '60s period. That's when Dylan chronicled and defined the attitudes of a generation that was wrestling emotionally and ideologically with change.

But Dylan alone can't restore the intensity of that period. Despite an aura of growing sociopolitical discord, the '60s crowd has moved on to other concerns (reference point: "The Big Chill") and the new pop generation is concerned chiefly with fashion and dance.

Dylan's art, however, has continued to reflect the questioning, idealistic spirit of the '60s. His LPs from *"Planet Waves"* to *"Slow Train Coming"* compose as thoughtful and absorbing a body of work as anyone produced in the 70s. And *"Infidels"* maintains those standards.

This is an album about perilous times and betrayed intent. Some of the songs are topical. *"Neighborhood Bully"* salutes the independence and resolve of Israel in battling for its survival, while *"Union Sundown"* laments the shortsighted greed of American commerce. The album is most involving, however, in the free-wheeling abstractness of tunes like *"License to Kill"* and *"Man of Peace."*

At one point, Dylan sings, *"You know, the streets are filled with vipers/Who've lost all ray of hope/You know, it's not even safe no more/In the palace of the Pope."* Elsewhere, he prophesizes, *"Well, the howling wolf will howl tonight, the king snake will crawl/Trees that've stood for a 1,000 years suddenly will fall."* On the issue of perilous times, he said: **"That's the state of affairs right now. Maybe that's always been the state of affairs, but it seems especially**

true now. That's why I picked these particular songs for the album. I don't know if that (subject) **appeals to people or not, but I felt I had to do these songs now."**

In the midst of this anxiety, Dylan suggests a growing helplessness and confusion across the country.

During the interview, he quipped: **"America is a divided nation right now. It doesn't know whether to follow the President or the Green Bay Packers."**

The album's key song. "*Man of Peace*," warns of the false prophets who suggest easy ways out of the turmoil. Against a rollicking country-blues beat. Dylan sings:

Look out your window, baby. There's a scene you'd like to catch.
The band is playing "Dixie." A man got his hand outstretched.
Could be the Fuehrer. Could be the local priest.
You know sometimes Satan, he comes as a man of peace.

In the interview, Dylan amplified on a theme that has also been consistent in his work: attacking hypocrisy and fraud.

"To me, the greatest sinners were the shoddy lawyers, corrupt promoters, professional gossip peddlers—the wolves in sheep's clothing who present themselves as saints, but whose duty is to nobody but themselves.

"Reality is distorted when a sinner is presented as some dirty wino who sleeps in his clothes or some run-of-the-mill whore with two black eyes. It's easy to pull the wool down over somebody's eyes. Most people think Sylvester Stallone is a boxer."

Asked if he is more pessimistic than in the '60s, he said: **"I don't think any of my songs have been pessimistic. In every song I've written. I think, there has been a way out because that's just the nature of me."**

Still, "*Union Sundown*" is a disheartening tale of the American Dream being ripped apart by the greed of businessmen and unions—and the effect of that greed on other countries. The song includes these lines:

Democracy don't rule the world
You'd better get that in your head.
This world is ruled by violence
But I guess that's better left unsaid.
From Broadway to the Milky Way
That's a lot of territory indeed.
And, a man's gonna do what he has to do
When he's got a hungry mouth to feed.

Dylan isn't thoroughly satisfied with the song.

"I think that line (about the world being ruled by violence) **is absolutely true,"** he said. **"It's not necessarily poetic or anything else. It's just true. I think that song could have been much stronger than it is.**

"One thing that bothers me is that America is slowly but surely isolated from other countries—isolated with no friends, nothing. It's very dangerous.

"But I was just trying to keep the song in the area of businesses and industries all being taken away, going somewhere else. I don't think the enemy is going to conquer America with atom bombs or missiles. I think they are just going to buy America or steal America and sell it back to them."

At 42, Dylan has been making records for half his life. Columbia Records is planning to release a five-album retrospective set next year, including two sides of previously unavailable material. But Dylan seemed only remotely interested in that project. He prefers to think about his new music.

Though Dylan has spent considerable time here since the early 70s. he doesn't seem to call any place home. When in the country, he divides his time among Los Angeles, New York and his home state of Minnesota.

While fans and the media don't tend to pry into his life with the obsessiveness they showed in he '60s, Dylan remains a visible target.

"The truth is there's not much that they can really pry into now." he said. **"I've sort of got walls up all over the place. They can only get so far. In those days. I was more vulnerable because I was out there so far** (emotionally) **and I felt totally unprotected. Look what happened to Jim Morrison, He got out there so far and he had to go, he had to leave."**

Still, the murder of John Lennon must have a sobering effect on someone who stirs such strong feelings.

"Being in this (rock 'n' roll) **position is a dangerous thing,"** he said. **"There's always a feeling that anything can happen with the world being as crazy as it is. Sure, a guy could work in a bank and get run over, too, but entertainers are always a target for love and hate."**

Dylan has no plans to tour, but he said he enjoys the road—even though his recent tours have been such controversial affairs. In 1978, some fans didn't like the way he had rearranged the old hits. In his last Los Angeles appearance, fans objected to the absence of the old songs in the gospel-flavored shows.

"There was always some kind of resistance," he said, fingering another glass of brandy during the lengthy restaurant interview. **"If it wasn't about religion, it was about style of music. If it wasn't style, it was about the clothes you wore. If it wasn't clothes, it was about the people you knew. There was always something that people didn't like. I've been used to that since I was born."**

Will he perform any of the "*Slow Train*" songs on future tours?

"Yeah. I'll probably do a few of those." he said. **"I get letters from people who say they were touched by those** (gospel) **shows. I don't disavow any of that. I've never made a record yet that I disavow..."**

28 February 1984
Grammy Awards Ceremony,
Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles, California

Source: *Circulating tape*

Bob Dylan (BD) presents Grammy for the New Song of the Year with Stevie Wonder (SW). The ceremony was hosted by John Denver (JD).

JD: …and now let's get to the Awards. To present our first Awartd of the evening for the Best New Song of the Year, here are two great, great songwriters. Mr Bob Dylan, Mr Stevie Wonder.

[long applause]

SW: You'd better stop that. You're making us feel like stars. Hello? OK. This is a very exciting category, as you know, because this is the one that is solely designated for those writers whose song will be nominated as Song of the Year. And there're five song, and of course you know only one can win. But I think, and I'm sure Bobby feel the same way, that just being nominated in itself in an honor. So. You got it.
BD: The nominees are: [playback starts, Dylan keeps silent]… **Oh, "*All Night Long*"** [pause] **Lionel Richie.**
SW: …Lionel Richie, right. "*Beat It*"! Michael Jackson.
BD: [prematurely] **"*Billy Jean*"** [*Billy Jean* playback starts] **"*Billy Jean*" Michael Jackson.**
SW: "*Every Breath You Take*" Sting.
BD: "*Maniac*"…
SW: … Michael Sembello…
BD: … Dennis Matkosky.
SW: …and the winner is… you know what, let's just forget all that stuff. [tears the envelope]. You know what, every year the same old thing happens, right? "And the winner is… blah, blah, blah" But this time we're gonna do things different and unique and special, okay? And the 80s. This is the 80s, right? So, what we wanna do is to get you all to decide… [laughter] Is it song number one [applause], number two [applause], number three, four or five? You are to say. Which one is it? [audience roars]. Oh, it'll never work.
BD: Oh no, we gotta do it the old fashioned way.
SW: Let me look at that, let me see that. [Dylan gives the real envelope to SW; audience laugh].
BD: "*Every Breath You Take*"
SW: "*Every Breath You Take*" Sting!

JD: Sting's not here tonight…
BD: Sting's not here tonight. He's out there…
SW: But we'll take the Award with us.
BD: …touring, but we'll take it, yeah!
SW: Congratulations to you, Sting.

[applause]

March 1984
Kurt Loder Interview, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 481-484.

Kurt Loder interviewed Dylan in a Greek Café on Third Avenue, New York City, sometime during March 1984 whist Dylan was filming his part in the Jokerman video. The interview appeared in Rolling Stone on June 21st 1984. Where Bob refers to Nigel Davenport, he really means Nigel Denver, possibly confusing the name with Bob Davenport, both being British folk singers in those days.

KL: People have put various labels on you over the past several years: "He's a born-again Christian"; "he's an ultra-Orthodox Jew". Are any of these labels accurate?

BD: Not really. People call you this, or they call you that But I can't respond to that, because then it seems that I'm defensive, and you know, what does it matter, really?

KL: But weren't three of your albums – *Slow Train Coming*, *Saved* and *Shot Of Love* – inspired by some sort of born-again religious experience?

BD: I would never call it that. I've never said I'm born again. That's just a media term. I don't think I've ever been an agnostic. I've always thought there's a superior power, that this is not the real world and that there's a world to come. That no soul has died, every soul is alive – either in holiness or in flames. And there's probably a lot of middle ground.

KL: Do you belong to any church or synagogue?

BD: Not really. Uh, the Church of the Poison Mind (laughs)**.**

KL: Can you converse and find agreement with Orthodox Jews?

BD: Yeah, yeah.

KL: And with Christians?

BD: Oh, yeah. Yeah, with anybody.

KL: When you meet up with Orthodox people, can you sit down with them and say, "Well, you should really check out Christianity"?

BD: Well, yeah, if somebody asks me, I'll tell 'em. But you know, I'm not gonna just offer my opinion. I'm more about playing music, you know?

KL: Do you follow the political scene or have any sort of fix on what the politicians are talking about this election year?

BD: I think politics is an instrument of the devil. Just that clear. I think politics is what kills; it doesn't bring anything alive. Politics is corrupt; I mean, anybody knows that.

KL: So you don't care who's President? It doesn't make any difference?

BD: I don't think so. I mean, how long is Reagan gonna be President? I've seen, like four or five of 'em myself, you know? And I've seen two of them die in office. How can you deal with Reagan and get so serious about that when the man isn't even gonna be there when you get your thing together?

KL: So you don't think there's any difference between, say, a Kennedy and a Nixon? It doesn't matter at all?

BD: I don't know. It's very popular nowadays to think of yourself as a "liberal humanist". That's such a bullshit term. It means less than nothing. Who was a better President? Well, you got me. I don't know what people's errors are; nobody's perfect, for sure. But I thought Kennedy, both Kennedy's – I just liked them. And I like Martin.... Martin Luther King. I thought those were people who were blessed and touched, you know? The fact that they all went out with bullets doesn't change nothin'. Because the good they do gets planted. And those seeds live on longer than that.

KL: Any thought on abortion?

BD: Abortion? I personally don't think abortion is that important. I think it's just an issue to evade whatever issues are makin' people think about abortion.

KL: Well, I mean, when abortion's used as a form of birth control...

BD: Well, I think birth control is another hoax that women shouldn't have bought, but they did buy. I mean, if a man don't wanna knock up a woman, that's his problem, you know what I mean? It's interesting: They arrest prostitutes, but they never arrest the guys with the prostitutes. It's all very one-sided.

KL: In regard to these feminist sympathies...

BD: I think women rule the world and that no man has ever done anything that a woman either hasn't allowed him to do or encouraged him to do.

KL: What do you tell your kids about things like sex and drugs?

BD: Well, they don't really ask me too much about that stuff. I think they probably learn enough just by hangin' around me, you know?

KL: You had a drug period at one time, didn't you?

BD: I never got hooked on any drug – not like you'd say, uh, "Eric Clapton: his drug period".

KL: Ever take LSD?

BD: I don't wanna say anything to encourage anybody, but, uh, who knows? Who knows what people stick in your drinks or what kind of cigarettes you're smokin'?

KL: Did you get to see any of the original rock n' roll guys, like Little Richard, Buddy Holly?

BD: Yeah, sure. I saw Buddy Holly two or three nights before he died. I saw him in Duluth [Minnesota]**, at the armory. He played there with Link Wray. I don't remember the Big Bopper. Maybe he'd gone off by the time I came in. But I saw Richie Valens. And Buddy Holly, yeah. He was great. He was incredible. I mean, I'll never forget the image of seeing Buddy Holly up on the bandstand. And he died – it must have been a week after this. It was unbelievable.**

Late at night, I used to listen to Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Jimmy Reed and Howlin' Wolf blastin' in from Shreveport [Louisiana]**. It was a radio show that lasted all night I used to stay up till two, three o'clock in the morning. Listened to all those songs, then tried to figure them out. I started playing myself. I had a couple of bands in high school, maybe three or four of them. Lead singers would always come in and take my bands, because they would have connections, like maybe their fathers would know somebody, so they could get a job in the neighboring town at the pavilion for a Sunday picnic or something. And I'd lose my band. I'd see it all the time.**

KL: That must have made you a little bitter.

BD: Yeah, it did, actually. And then I had another band, with my cousin from Duluth. I played, you know, rock 'n' roll, rhythm & blues. And then that died out, pretty much, in my last year of high school.

After that I remember I heard a record – I think maybe it was the Kingston Trio or Odetta or something like that – and I sorta got into folk music. Rock & roll was pretty much finished. And I traded my stuff for a Martin that they don't sell anymore, an 0018, maybe, and it was brown. The first acoustic guitar I had. A great guitar. And then, either in Minneapolis or St. Paul, I heard Woody Guthrie. And when I heard Woody Guthrie, that was it, it was all over.

KL: What struck you about him?

BD: Well, I heard them old records where he sings with Cisco Houston and Sonny [Terry] **and Brownie** [McGhee] **and stuff like that and then his own songs. And he really struck me as an independent character. But no one ever talked about him. So I went through all his records I could find and picked all that up by any means I could. And when I arrived in New York, I was mostly singing his songs and folk songs. At that time I was runnin' into people who were playing the same kind of thing, but I was kind of combining elements of Southern mountain music with bluegrass stuff, English ballad stuff. I could hear a song once and know it So when I came to New York, I could do a lot of different stuff. But I never thought I'd see rock & roll again when I arrived here.**

KL: Do you still look back on some of it as protest material? Or did you ever see it as protest material?

BD: I think all my stuff is protest material in some kinda way. I always felt like my position and my place came after that first wave or maybe second wave of rock & roll. And I felt like I would never have done the things I did if I just had to listen to popular radio.

KL: Is it true that *Like A Rolling Stone* was done in one take?

BD: Yeah, one take. It's amazing. It sounds like it's so together. That was back in the days when we used to do, oh, man, six, eight, ten tunes a session. We used to just go in and come out the next day.

KL: It always seemed to me that you were sort of infallible up until *Self Portrait* in 1970. What's the story behind that album?

BD: At the time, I was in Woodstock, and I was getting a great degree of notoriety for doing nothing. Then I had that motorcycle accident, which put me outta commission. Then, when I woke up and caught my senses, I realised I was just workin' for all these leeches. And I didn't want to do that. Plus, I had a family, and I just wanted to see my kids.

I'd also seen that I was representing all these things that I didn't know anything about. Like I was supposed to be on acid. It was all storm-the-embassy kind of stuff -Abbie Hofman in the streets – and they sorta figured me as the kingpin of all that. I said: "Wait a minute, I'm just a musician. So my songs are about this and that." So what? But people need a leader. People need a leader more than a leader needs people, really. I mean, anybody can step up there and be a leader if he's got the people there that want one. I didn't want that, though.

But then came the big news about Woodstock, about musicians going up there, and it was like a wave of insanity breakin' loose around the house day and night You'd come in the house and find people there, people comin' through the woods, at all hours of the day and night, knockin' on your door. It was really dark and depressing. And there was no way to respond to all this, you know? It was as if they were suckin' your very blood out. I said: "Now, wait, these people can't be my fans. They just can't be." And they kept comin'. We had to get out of there. This was just about the time of that Woodstock Festival, which was the sum total of all this bullshit And it seemed to have something to do with me, this Woodstock Nation and everything it represented. So we couldn't breathe. I couldn't get any space for myself and my family, and there was no help, nowhere. I got very resentful about this whole thing, and we got outta there.

We moved to New York. Lookin' back it really was a stupid thing to do. But there was a house available in MacDougal street, and I always remembered that as a nice place. So I just bought this house, sight unseen. But it wasn't the same when we got back. The Woodstock Nation had overtaken MacDougal Street also. There'd be crowds outside my house. And I said: "Well, fuck it I wish these people would just forget about me. I wanna do something they can't possibly like, they can't relate to. They'll see it and they'll listen and they'll say: "Well let's go on to the next person. He ain't sayin' it no more. He ain't givin' us what we want," you know? They'll go on to somebody else." But the whole idea back-fired. Because the album went out there, and the people said, "This ain't what we want", and they got more resentful.

KL: What's your latest stuff like?

BD: I just write 'em as they come, you know? They're not anything different from what I've ever written about, but they're probably put together in a way that other ones aren't put together. So it might seem like somethin' new. I don't think I've found any new chords or new progressions or any new words that haven't been said before. I think they're pretty much all the same old things, just kinda reworked.

KL: Do your old songs still mean the same to you as when you wrote them?

BD: Yeah. Sittin' here, it's hard to imagine it, but yeah. Once you lock into that stuff it's like it was just written yesterday. When I'm singin' the stuff, sometimes I say: "Wow! Where'd these lyrics come from?" It's amazing.

March 1984
Kurt Loder Interview (Full), New York City

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 711-722.

This is the full text of the Kurt Loder interview as published in *Rolling Stone* No. 424 on June 21st 1984.

KL: People have put various labels on you over the past several years: "He's a born-again Christian"; "he's an ultra-Orthodox Jew." Are any of these labels accurate?

BD: Not really. People call you this or they call you that. But I can't respond to that, because then it seems like I'm defensive, and, you know, what does it matter, really?

KL: But weren't three of your albums – *Slow Train Coming*, *Saved* and *Shot of Love* – inspired by some sort of born-again religious experience?

BD: I would never call it that. I've never said I'm born again. That's just a media term. I don't think I've ever been an agnostic. I've always thought there's a superior power, that this is not the real world and that there's a world to come. That no soul has died, every soul is alive, either in holiness or in flames. And there's probably a lot of middle ground.

KL: What is your spiritual stance, then?

BD: Well, I don't think that this is it, you know – this life ain't nothin'. There's no way you're gonna convince me this is all there is to it. I never, ever believed that. I believe in the Book of Revelation. The leaders of this world are eventually going to play God, if they're not already playing God and eventually a man will come that everybody will think is God. He'll do things, and they'll say, "Well, only God can do those things. It must be him."

KL: You're a literal believer of the Bible?

BD: Yeah. Sure, yeah. I am.

KL: Are the Old and New Testaments equally valid?

BD: To me.

KL: Do you belong to any church or synagogue?

BD: Not really. Uh, the Church of the Poison Mind [Laughs].

KL: Do you actually believe the end is at hand?

BD: I don't think it's at hand. I think we'll have at least 200 years. And the new kingdom that comes in, I mean, people can't even imagine what its gonna be like. There's a lot of people walkin' around who think the new kingdom's comin' next year and that they're gonna be right in there among the top guard. And they're wrong. I think when it comes in, there are people who'll be prepared for it, but if the new kingdom happened tomorrow and you were sitting there and I was sitting here, you wouldn't even remember me.

KL: Can you converse and find agreement with Orthodox Jews?

BD: Yeah, yeah.

KL: And with Christians?

BD: Oh, yeah. Yeah, with anybody.

KL: Sounds like a new synthesis.

BD: Well, no. If I thought the world needed a new religion, I would start one. But there are a lot of other religions, too. There's those Indian religions, Eastern religions, Buddhism, you know. They're happening, too.

KL: When you meet up with Orthodox people, can you sit down with them and say, "Well, you should really check out Christianity"?

BD: Well, yeah. If somebody asks me. I'll tell'em. But, you know, I'm not gonna just offer my opinion. I'm more about playing music, you know?

KL: Your views apparently seemed clear to many record buyers. Were you frustrated by the commercial resistance – both on record and on the road – to your fundamentalist-influenced music?

BD: Well, after the'78 gospel tour, I wanted to keep touring in'79. But I knew that we'd gone everywhere in'78, so how you gonna play in'79? Go back to the same places? So, at that point, I figured, "Well, I don't care if I draw no crowds no more." And a lotta places we played on the last tour, we filled maybe half the hall.

KL: And you don't think that was because of the material you were doing?

BD: I don't think so. I don't think it had to do with anything. I think when your time is your time, it don't matter what you're doin'. Its either your time, or it's not your time. And I didn't feel the last few years was really my time. But that's no reason for me to make any kinda judgment call on what it is I'm gonna be. The people who reacted to the gospel stuff would've reacted that way if I hadn't done, you know, *Song to Woody*.

KL: You think so?

BD: Yeah, I know it. I can usually anticipate the stuff- what's going on, what's the mood. There's a lotta young performers around. And they look good and they move good, and they're sayin' stuff that is, uh, excitable, you know? Face it, a lotta that stuff is just made and geared for twelve-year-old kids. It's like baby food.

KL: Your latest album, *Infidels*, is hardly subteen fodder. Some critics have even detected a new note of conservatism in some of the songs – even outright jingoism in *Neighborhood Bully*, -in which the metaphorical subject is said to be "just one man" whose "enemies say he's on their land." That's clearly a strong Zionist political statement, is it not?

BD: You'll have to point that out to me, you know, what line is in it that spells that out. I'm not a political songwriter. Joe Hill was a political songwriter; uh, Merle Travis wrote some political songs. *Which Side Are You On?* is a political; song. And *Neighborhood Bully*, to me, is not a political song, because if it were, it would fall into a certain political party. If you're talkin' about it as an Israeli political song -even if it is an Israeli political song – in Israel alone, there's maybe twenty political parties. I don't know where that would fall, what party.

KL: Well, would it be fair to call that song a heartfelt statement of belief?

BD: Maybe it is, yeah. But just because somebody feels a certain way, you can't come around and stick some political-party slogan on it. If you listen closely, it really could be about other things. It's simple and easy to define it so you got it pegged, and you can deal with it in that certain kinda way. However, I wouldn't do that'cause I don't know what the politics of Israel is. I just don't know.

KL: So you haven't resolved for yourself, for instance, the Palestinian question?

BD: Not really, because I live here.

KL: Would you ever live in Israel?

BD: I don't know. Its hard to speculate what tomorrow may bring. I kinda live where I find myself.

KL: At another point in the song, you say, "He got no allies to really speak of," and while "he buys obsolete weapons and he won't be denied... no one sends flesh and blood to fight by his side." Do you feel that America should send troops over there?

BD: No. The song doesn't say that. Who should, who shouldn't – who am I to say?

KL: Well, do you think Israel should get more help from the American Jewish community? I don't want to push this too far, but it just seems so...

BD: Well, you're not pushing it too far, you're just making it specific. And you're making it specific to what's going on today. But what's going on today isn't gonna last, you know? The battle of Armageddon is specifically spelled out: where it will be fought and, if you wanna get technical, where it will be fought. And the battle of Armageddon definitely will be fought in the Middle East.

KL: Do you follow the political scene or have any sort of fix on what the politicians are talking about this election year?

BD: I think politics is an instrument of the Devil. Just that clear. I think politics is what kills; it doesn't bring anything alive. Politics is corrupt; I mean anybody knows that.

KL: So you don't care who's president? It doesn't make any difference?

BD: I don't think so. I mean, how long is Reagan gonna be president? I've seen like four or five of'em myself, you know? And I've seen two of'em die in office. How can you deal with Reagan and get so serious about that, when the man isn't even gonna be there when you get your thing together?

KL: So you don't think there's any difference between, say, a Kennedy and a Nixon? It doesn't matter at all?

BD: I don't know. It's very popular nowadays to think of yourself as a "liberal humanist." That's such a bullshit term. It means less than nothing. Who was a better president? Well, you got me. I don't know what people's errors are; nobody's perfect for sure. But I thought Kennedy – both Kennedys – I just liked them. And I liked Martin... Martin Luther King. I thought those were people who were blessed and touched, you know? The fact they all went out with bullets doesn't change nothin'. Because the good they do gets planted. And those seeds live on longer than that.

KL: Do you still hope for peace?

BD: There is not going to be any peace.

KL: You don't think it's worth working for?

BD: No. It's just gonna be a false peace. You can reload your rifle, and that moment you're reloading it that's peace. It may last for a few years.

KL: Isn't it worth fighting for that?

BD: Nah, none of that matters. I heard somebody on the radio talkin' about what's happenin' in Haiti, you know? "We must be concerned about what's happening in Haiti. We're global people now". And they're gettin' everybody in that frame of mind – like we're not just the United States anymore, we're global. We're thinkin' in terms of the whole world because communications come right into your house. Well that's what the Book of Revelation is all about. And you can just about now that anybody who comes out for peace is not for peace.

KL: But what if someone genuinely is for peace?

BD: Well, you can't be for peace and be global. It's just like that song *Man of Peace*. But none of this matters, if you believe in another world. If you believe in this world, you're stuck; you really don't have a chance. You'll go mad'cause you won't see the end of it. You may wanna stick around, but you won't be able to. On another level though, you will be able to see this world. You'll look back and say, "Ah, that's what it was all about all the time. Wow, why didn't I get that?"

KL: That's a very fatalistic view, isn't it?

BD: I think it's realistic. If it is fatalistic, it's only fatalistic on this level, and this level dies anyway, so what's the difference? So you're fatalistic, so what?

KL: There's a lyric in *License to Kill*: "Man has invented his doom / First step was touching the moon." Do you really believe that?

BD: Yeah, I do. I have no idea why I wrote that line, but on some level, it's like just a door into the unknown.

KL: Isn't man supposed to progress, to forge ahead?

BD: Well... but not there. I mean, what's the purpose of going to the moon? To me, it doesn't make any sense. Now they're gonna put a space station up there, and it's gonna cost what – $600 billion, $700 billion? And who's gonna benefit from it? Drug companies who are gonna be able to make better drugs. Does that make sense? Is that supposed to be something that a person is supposed to get excited about? Is that progress? I don't think they're gonna get better drugs. I think they're gonna get more expensive drugs.

Everything is computerised now, its all computers I see that as the beginning of the end. You can see everything going global. There's no nationality anymore, no I'm this or I'm that. "We're all the same, all workin' for one peaceful world, blah, blah, blah." Somebody's gonna have to come along and figure out what's happening with the United States. Is this just an island that's gonna be blown out of the ocean, or does it really figure in things? I really don't know. At this point right now, it seems that it figures into things. But later on, it will have to be a country that's self-sufficient, that can make it by itself without that many imports.

Right now, it seems like in the States, and most other countries, too, there's a big push on to make a big global country – one big country – where you can get all the materials from one place and assemble them someplace else and sell'em in another place, and the whole world is just all one, controlled by the same people, you know? And if its not there already, that's the point it's tryin' to get to.

KL: In *Union Sundown*, the Chevrolet you drive is "put together down in Argentina by a guy makin' thirty cents a day." Are you saying he'd be better off without that thirty cents a day?

BD: What's thirty cents a day? He don't need the thirty cents a day. I mean, people survived for 6000 years without having to work for slave wages for a person who comes down and... well, actually, it's just colonization. But see, I saw that stuff firsthand, because where I come from, they really got that deal good, with the ore.

KL: In Minnesota, in the Iron Range, where you grew up?

BD: Yeah. Everybody was workin' there at one time. In fact, ninety percent of the iron for the Second World War came out of those mines, up where I'm from. And eventually, they said, "Listen, this is costing too much money to get this out. We must he able to get it someplace else." Now the same thing is happening, I guess, with other products.

KL: What was it like growing up in Hibbing, Minnesota, in the fifties?

BD: You're pretty much ruled by nature up there. You have to sort of fall into line with that, regardless of how you're feeling that day or what you might want to do with your life, or what you think about. And it still is like that, I think.

KL: Were you aware of any anti Semitism there when you were a kid?

BD: No. Nothing really mattered to me except learning another song or a new chord, or finding a new place to play, you know? Years later, when I'd recorded a few albums, then I started seeing in places: "Bob Dylan's a Jew," stuff like that. I said, "Jesus, I never knew that." But they kept harping on it; it seemed like it was important for people to say that – like they'd say "the one-legged street singer or something." So after a period of time, I thought, "Well, gee, maybe I'll look into that." I don't know. I never noticed it occurring with any other artists; I mean, I've never seen it about Barbara Streisand or Neil Diamond. But it has occurred with me. As a kid, though, I never felt anything, like, I had to fight my way through schoolyard crowds, you know. As long as I had a guitar, I was happy.

KL: Was Hibbing an oppressive place? Did it just make you want to get out?

BD: Not really. I didn't really know anything else except, uh, Hank Williams. I remember hearin' Hank Williams one or two years before he died. And that sort of introduced me to the guitar. And once I had the guitar, it was never a problem. Nothing else was ever a problem.

KL: Did you get to see any of the original rock & roll guys, like Little Richard, Buddy Holly?

BD: Yeah, sure. I saw Buddy Holly two or three nights before he died. I saw him in Duluth, at the armory. He played there with Link Wray. I don't remember the Big Bopper. Maybe he'd gone off by the time I came in. But I saw Ritchie Valens. And Buddy Holly, yeah. He was great. He was incredible. I mean, I'll never forget the image of seeing Buddy Holly up on the bandstand. And he died – it must have been a week after that. It was unbelievable.

Late at night, I used to listen to Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Jimmy Reed and Howlin' Wolf blastin' in from Shreveport. It was a radio show that lasted all night. I used to stay up till two, maybe three o'clock in the morning. Listened to all those songs, then tried to figure them out. I started playing myself.

KL: How did you take to the guitar?

BD: First I bought a Nick Manoloff back. I don't think I could get past the first one. And had a Silvertone guitar from Sears. In those days, they cost thirty or forty dollars, and you only had to pay five dollars down to get it. So I had my first electric guitar. I had a couple of bands in high school, maybe three or four of'em. Lead singers would always come in and take my bands, because they would have connections, like maybe their fathers would know somebody, so they could get a job in the neighboring town at the pavilion for a Sunday picnic or something. And I'd lose my band. I'd see it all the time.

KL: That must have made you a little bitter.

BD: Yeah, it did, actually. And then I had another band with my cousin from Duluth. I played, you know, rock & roll, rhythm & blues. And then that died out pretty much, in my last year of high school.

And after that, I remember I heard a record – I think maybe it was the Kingston Trio or Odetta or someone like that – and I sorta got into folk music. Rock & roll was pretty much finished. And I traded my stuff for a Martin that they don't sell anymore, an 0018, maybe, and it was brown. The first acoustic guitar I had. A great guitar. And then, either in Minneapolis or St Paul, I heard Woody Guthrie. And when I heard Woody Guthrie, that was it, it was all over.

KL: What struck you about him?

BD: Well, I heard them old records, where he sings with Cisco Houston and Sonny [Terry] **and Brownie** [McGhee] **and stuff like that, and then his own songs. And he really struck me as an independent character. But no one ever talked about him. So I went through all his records I could find and picked all that up by any means I could. And when I arrived in New York, I was mostly singing his songs and folk songs. At that time, I was runnin' into people who were playing the same kind of thing, but I was kinda combining elements of Southern mountain music with bluegrass stuff, English-ballad stuff. I could hear a song once and know it. So when I came to New York, I could do a bit of different stuff. But I never thought I'd see rock & roll again when I arrived here.**

KL: Did you miss it?

BD: Not really, because I liked the folk scene. It was a whole community, a whole world that was all hooked up in different towns in the United States. You could go from here to California and always have a place to stay, and always play somewhere, and meet people. Nowadays, you go to see a folk singer – what's the folk singer doin'? He's singin' all his own songs. That ain't no folk singer. Folk singers sing those old folk songs, ballads.

I met a lot of folk singers in New York, and there were a lot of'em in the Twin Cities. But I ran into some people in England who really knew those songs. Martin Carthy, another guy named Nigel Davenport. Martin Carthy's incredible. I learned a lot of stuff from Martin. *Girl From The North Country* is based on a song I heard him sing -that *Scarborough Fair* song, which Paul Simon, I guess, just took the whole thing.

KL: Could folk ever become big again?

BD: Well, yeah, it could become big again. But people gotta go back and find the song's. They don't do it no more. I was tellin' somebody that thing about when you go to see a folk singer now, you hear somebody singin' his own songs And the person says, "Yeah, well, you started that." And in a sense, it's true. But I never would have written a song if I didn't play all them old folk songs first. I never would have thought to write a song, you know? There's no dedication to folk music now, no appreciation of the art form.

KL: Do you notice that you've influenced a lot of singers over the years?

BD: It's phrasing. I think I've phrased everything in a way that it's never been phrased before. I'm not tryin' to brag or anything – or maybe I am [laughs]**. But yeah I hear stuff on the radio, doesn't matter what kinda stuff it is, and I know that if you go back far enough you'll find somebody listened to Bob Dylan somewhere, because of the phrasing. Even the content of the tunes. Up until I started doin' that stuff, nobody was talkin' about that sort of thing. For music to succeed on any level... Well, you're always gonna have your pop-radio stuff, but the only people who are gonna succeed, really, are the people who are sayin' somethin' that is given to them to say. I mean, you can only carry *Tutti Frutti* so far.**

KL: Like the current rockabilly revival?

BD: The rockabilly revival was just about spirit and attitude.

KL: Were you aware of punk rock when it happened – the Sex Pistols, the Clash?

BD: Yeah, I didn't listen to it all the time, but it seemed like a logical step, and it still does. I think it's been hurt in a lotta ways by the fashion industry.

KL: You've seen the Clash, I understand?

BD: Yeah, I met them way back in 1977, 1978. In England. I think they're great. In fact, I think they're greater now than they were.

KL: You mean since Mick Jones left?

BD: Yeah. It's interesting. It took two guitar players to replace Mick.

KL: How about Prince – have you ever run into him in Minneapolis?

BD: No, I never have.

KL: Have you met Michael Jackson yet?

BD: No, I don't think so. I met Martha and the Vandellas.

KL: Do your kids tell you about new groups "You gotta check out Boy George"?

BD: Well, they used to, a few years ago. I kind of like everything.

KL: Are your kids musical?

BD: Yeah, they all play.

KL: Would you encourage them to go into the music business?

BD: I would never push'em or encourage'em to. I mean, I never went into it as a business. I went into it as a matter of survival. So I wouldn't tell anybody to go into it as a business. Its a pretty cutthroat business, from what I've seen.

KL: What do you tell your kids about things like sex and drugs?

BD: Well, they don't really ask me too much about that stuff. I think they probably learn enough just by hangin' around me, you know?

KL: You had a drug period at one time, didn't you?

BD: I never got hooked on any drug – not like you'd say, uh, "Eric Clapton: his drug period."

KL: Ever take LSD?

BD: I don't wanna say anything to encourage anybody, but, uh, who knows? Who knows what people stick in your drinks, or what kinda cigarettes you're smokin'?

KL: When people like Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin started dropping away, did you look upon that as a waste?

BD: Jimi, I thought was a big waste. I saw Jimi... Oh, man, that was sad when I saw him. He was in the back seat of a limousine on Bleecker Street, just... I couldn't even tell then whether he was dead or alive.

KL: Do your old songs still mean the same to you as when you wrote them?

BD: Yeah. Sittin' here, it's hard to imagine it, but yeah. Once you lock into that stuff, it's like it was just written yesterday. When I'm singin' the stuff, sometimes I say, "Wow! Where'd these lyrics come from?" It's amazing.

KL: Do you still look back on some of it as protest material? Or did you ever see it as protest material?

BD: I think all my stuff is protest material in some kinda way. I always felt that my position and my place came after that first wave, or maybe second wave, of rock & roll. And I felt like I would never have done the things I did if I just had to listen to popular radio.

KL: At one point, didn't you disassociate yourself from the protest form?

BD: Well, you see, I never called it protest. Protest is anything that goes against the ordinary and the established. And who's the founder of protest? Martin Luther.

KL: Is it true that *Like a Rolling Stone* was done in one take?

BD: Yeah, one take. It's amazing. It sounds like it's so together. That was back in the days when we used to just go in and come out the next day.

KL: Wasn't *Another Side of Bob Dylan* the result of an all-night session, too?

BD: Well, that was pretty quick, too. But that was easier to do; it was just me. But we used to do the same thing when there was a band in there. I don't think a song like *Rolling Stone* could have been done any other way. What are you gonna do, chart it out?

KL: How do you maintain a balance between the requirements of the modern recording studio and the fact that a lot of your best stuff in the past has been done very quickly?

BD: Right now, I'm changing my views on that. But I plan to do a little bit more acoustic stuff in the future. I think my next album is probably just gonna be me and my guitar and harmonica. I'm not saying all of it will be that way, but I'm sure a few songs will be. I know they will be.

KL: What's your latest stuff like?

BD: I just write'em as they come, you know? They're not about anything different than what I've ever written about., but they're probably put together in a way that other ones aren't put together. So it might seem like somethin' new. I don't think I've found any new chords or new progressions, or any new words that haven't been said before. I think they're pretty much all the same old thing, just kinda reworked.

KL: I heard an outtake from the Infidels sessions called *Blind Willie McTell*. Is that ever going to come out? It's a great song.

BD: I didn't think I recorded it right. But I don't know why that stuff gets out on me. I mean, it never seems to get out on other people.

KL: There's a lot of interest out there. You could put all your unreleased stuff out in, like, a twenty-volume set or something.

BD: Yeah, like *The Basement Tapes*. But it doesn't occur to me to put it out. If I wrote a song three years ago, I seldom go back and get that. I just leave'em alone. I never really liked *The Basement Tapes*. I mean, they were just songs we had done for the publishing company, as I remember. They were used only for other artists to record those songs. I wouldn't have put'em out. But, you know, Columbia wanted to put'em out, so what can you do?

KL: You don't think that album has a great feeling to it? That material really has an aura.

BD: I can't even remember it. People have told me they think it's very Americana and all that. I don't know what they're talkin' about.

KL: So, then, it wouldn't occur to you to put out, say, the 1966 tapes of the Royal Albert Hall concert in London, another great bootleg?

BD: No. Uh-uh. I wouldn't put'em out because I didn't think they were quality.

KL: That stuffs great. I'm amazed you wouldn't want to see it done legitimately and really do the tapes right.

BD: Well, but you see, Columbia's never offered to do that. They have done that with *The Basement Tapes* and the *Budokan* album. But they've never offered to put that out as a historical album or whatever. And believe me, if they wanted to do it, they could.

KL: Speaking of the *Budokan* album...

BD: The *Budokan* album was only supposed to be for Japan. They twisted my arm to do a live album for Japan. It was the same band I used on *Street Legal*, and we had just started findin' our way into things on that tour when they recorded it. I never meant for it to be any type of representation of my stuff or my band or my live show.

KL: That was when the critics started saying you were going Las Vegas, wasn't it?

BD: Well, I think the only people who would have said somethin' like that were people who've never been to Las Vegas.

KL: I think it was the clothes you wore at the time. They said it made you look like Neil Diamond.

BD: Well, it just goes to show you how times have changed since 1978, if you could be criticised for what you were wearing. I mean, now you can wear anything. You see a guy wearing a dress onstage now, it's like, "Oh, yeah, right". You expect it. I've seen a lot of stuff written about me. People must be crazy. I mean responsible people specially on that *Street Legal* tour. That band we assembled then, I don't think that will ever be duplicated. It was a big ensemble. And what did people say? I mean, responsible people who knew better. All I saw was "Bruce Springsteen" because there was a saxophone player. And it was disco – well, there wasn't any disco in it.

KL: It always seemed to me that you were sort of infallible in your career up until *Self Portrait*, in 1970. What's the story behind that album?

BD: At the time, I was in Woodstock, and I was getting a great degree of notoriety for doing nothing. Then I had that motorcycle accident which put me outta commission. Then, when I woke up and caught my senses, I realized I was just workin' for all these leeches. And I didn't wanna do that. Plus, I had a family, and I just wanted to see my kids.

I'd also seen that I was representing all these things that I didn't know anything about. Like, I was supposed to be on acid. It was all storm-the-embassy kind of stuff -Hoffman in streets – and they sorta figured me as the kingpin of all that. I said, "Wait a minute, I'm just a musician. So my songs are about this and that. So what?" But people need a leader. People need a leader more than a leader needs people, really. I mean, anybody can step up and be a leader, if he's got the people there that want one. I didn't want that, though.

But then came the big news about Woodstock, about musicians goin' up there, and it was like a wave of insanity breakin' loose around the house day and night. You'd come in the house and find people there, people comin' through the wood, at all hours of the day and night knockin' on your door. It was really dark and depressing. And there was no way to respond to all this, you know? It was as if they were suckin' your very blood out. I said, "Now, wait, these people can't be my fans. They just can't be." And they kept comin'. We had to get out of there.

This was just about the time of that Woodstock Festival, which was the sum total of all this bullshit. And it seemed to have something to do with me, this Woodstock Nation, and everything it represented. So we couldn't breathe. I couldn't get any space for myself and my family, and there was no help, nowhere. I got very resentful about the whole thing, and we got outta there.

We moved to New York. Lookin' back it really was a stupid thing to do. But there was a house available on MacDougal Street, and I always remembered that as a nice place. So I just bought this house, sight unseen. But it wasn't the same when we got back. The Woodstock Nation had overtaken MacDougal Street also. There'd be crowds outside my house. And I said, "Well fuck it. I wish these people would just forget about me. I wanna do something they can't possibly like, they can't possibly relate to. They'll see it, and they'll listen, and they'll say,'Well let's go on to the next person. He ain't sayin' it no more. He ain't givin' us what we want' you know? They'll go on to somebody else." But the whole idea backfired. Because the album went out there, and the people said, "This ain't what we want" and they got more resentful. And then I did this portrait for the cover. I mean, there was no title for that album. I knew somebody who had some paints and a square canvas, and I did the cover up in about five minutes. And I said, "Well I'm gonna call this album *Self Portrait*.

KL: Which was duly interpreted by the Press as: This is what he is... Yeah, exactly. And to me, it was a joke. But why did you make it a double-album joke?

BD: Well, it wouldn't have held up as a singe album – then it really would've been bad, you know. I mean, if you're gonna put a lot of crap on it, you might as well load it up!

KL: In the Sixties, there was feeling that this society really was changing. Looking back, do you feel it changed that much?

BD: I think it did. A lot of times people forget. These modern days that we know now, where you can get on an airplane and fly anywhere you want non-stop, direct, and be there – that's recent That's since what, 1940? Not even that – after the war, it was. And telephones? Forget it. I mean, when I was growin' up, I remember we had a phone in the house, but you had to dial it; and I also remember there was a party line of maybe six other people. And no matter when you got on the phone, you know, there might be somebody else on it. And I never grew up with television. When television first came in, it came on at like four in the afternoon, and it was off the air by seven at night. So you had more time to... I guess, to think. It can never go back to the way it was, but it was all changing in the Fifties and Sixties. My kids, they know television, they know telephones. They don't think about that stuff, you know? Even airplanes: I never rode on an airplane until 1964 or somethin'. Up till that time, if you wanted to go across the country, you took a train or a Greyhound bus, or you hitchhiked. I don't know. I don't think of myself as that old, or having seen that much, but...

KL: Do you have MTV at home?

BD: No, I don't get that. I have to go to the city to see MTV. And then, once I do find a set that has it, I'll just watch it for, you know, as long as my eyes can stay open. Until they pop out, I'll just watch it.

KL: What do you make of video? Do you think it's all that important?

BD: Uh, to sell records, yeah. But videos have always been around. David Bowie's been makin''em since he started. There was one thing I saw on a video, and I thought it was great. Then I heard the record on the radio, and it was nothin', you know? But video does give you something to hook on to.

I was just talkin' to Ronnie Wood the other night. He went to the Duran Duran show at the Garden, and he said it was really funny, because they had a great big screen up over the stage with huge close-ups of the band members. And every time they showed a close-up of somebody in the band, the audience would just go crazy – they'd go mad, you know? So while they were showing a close-up of somebody in the band the guitar player'd be playing a lick. So he'd think they were doing it for him. Then he'd play the same lick again to get the same response – and get nothing.

KL: I remember you were trying to get together with Ronnie and Keith [Richards] the other night. How'd it go?

BD: It was pretty subdued actually. But I always like to see Keith or Woody or Eric or... There's a few people I like to see whenever I can. People who play like that. It has to do with a style of music, you know?

KL: Do you ever collaborate?

BD: Yeah, but usually it never happens. It's, "Okay, that's great, we'll pick that up later and finish it." But nothin' ever really gets finished.

KL: Are your best friends mostly musicians?

BD: My best friends? Jeez, let me try to think of one [laughs]**.**

KL: There must be a few.

BD: Best friends? Jesus, I mean, that's...

KL: You've got to have a best friend.

BD: Whew! Boy, there's a question that'll really make you think. Best friend? Jesus, I think I'd go into a deep, dark depression if I were to think about who's my best friend.

KL: There have to be one or two, don't there?

BD: Well, there has to be... there must be... there's gotta be. But hey, you know, a best friend is someone who's gonna die for you. I mean, that's your best friend, really. I'd be miserable trying to think who my best friend is.

KL: What do you do with your year, aside from doing an album and maybe a tour?

BD: Well I'm happy doin' nothin' [laughs]**.**

KL: Do you spend a lot of time in Minnesota?

BD: I get back there when I can, yeah. I got some property outside of St Paul back in'74, a sort of farm.

KL: Do you actually farm on this farm?

BD: Well, it grows potatoes and corn, but I don't sit on the tractor, if that's what you mean. I'm usually either here or on the West Coast or down in the Caribbean. Me and another guy have a boat down there. Jokerman kinda came to me in the islands. It's very mystical. The shapes there, and shadows, seem to be so ancient. The song was sorta inspired by these spirits they call jumbis.

KL: Do you still have that house in California, that big, strange-looking place?

BD: That's a story – you could write a baroque novel offa that. I had five kids, and I just couldn't find a house that was suitable. I liked this area because there was a public school in the neighborhood, and the kids could ride their bikes to it. So I bought this house on about an acre of land, past Malibu. And my wife looked at it and said, "Well its okay, but it needs another bedroom". So I got somebody to design another bedroom. You had to file plans, and they had to be passed – that's the way the red tape is out there. So we had architects come in and right away they said "Oh, yeah, Bob Dylan, right. We'll really make somethin' spectacular here." Anyway, it took six months to get the plans passed just to put on another room. I mean, one room... Jesus! So I went out there one day to see how the room was progressing, and they'd knocked down the house! I asked the guys who were workin', "Where's the house?" And they said they had to knock it down to restructure it for this bedroom upstairs.

KL: Sounds like somebody was making a lot of money off you.

BD: Ain't that the truth? I mean, has it ever been otherwise? So, one thing led to another, and I said as long as they're knocking this place down, we're just gonna add more rooms to it. And anytime some craftsman came by – hitchhiking to Oregon or coming back down to Baja -we'd say "Hey, you wanna do some work on this place?" And they'd do woodwork, tilework, all that kinda thing. And eventually it was built. But then they closed the school out there, and the kids moved away, and Sara moved away, and, uh... So I was stuck with this place. As a matter of fact, I've never even put anything on the living room floor. It's just cement.

KL: Since you've spent a lot of time in the Caribbean, you must be familiar with Rastafarianism.

BD: Not really. I know a lot of Rastas. I know they're Bible-believing people, and it's very easy for me to relate to any Bible believing person.

KL: Well, what if someone is born in a place where there are no Bibles – the Tibetan mountains, say. Could they still be saved?

BD: I don't know. I really don't. Allen Ginsberg is a Tibetan – a Buddhist, or something like that. I'm just not familiar enough with that to say anything about it.

KL: Speaking of Allen Ginsberg, doesn't the Bible say that homosexuality is an abomination?

BD: Yeah, it does. It says that.

KL: And yet Ginsberg's a good guy, right?

BD: Yeah, well but that's no reason for me to condemn somebody, because they drink or they're corrupt in orthodox ways or they wear their shirt inside out. I mean, that's their scene. It certainly doesn't matter to me. I've got no ax to grind with any of that.

KL: Were you up in Minnesota when they tried to pass that antiporn law in Minneapolis? The contention was that pornography is a violation of women's civil rights. What do you think?

BD: Well pornography is pretty deeply embedded. I mean, it's into everything, isn't it? You see commercials on TV that millions of dollars have been put into, and they look pretty sexy to me. They look like they're pushing sex in some kinda way.

KL: In a way, that's the real pornography, because the point isn't to get you off sexually, it's to sell you something.

BD: Yeah, it's to stick the idea in your brain. But it's too far gone. I mean, if you start makin' laws against porno magazines and that kinda stuff, well, then where do you draw the line? You gotta stop the prime-time television shows also.

KL: Any thoughts on abortion?

BD: Abortion? I personally don't think abortion is that important. I think it's just an issue to evade whatever issues are makin' people think about abortion.

KL: Well, I mean, when abortion's used as a form of birth control...

BD: Well, I think birth control is another hoax that women shouldn't have bought, but they did buy. I mean, If a man don't wanna knock up a woman, that's his problem, you know what I mean? It's interesting: They arrest prostitutes but they never arrest the guys with the prostitutes. It's all very one-sided. And the same with birth control. Why do they make women take all them pills and fuck themselves up like that? People have used contraceptives for years and years and years. So all of a sudden some scientist invents a pill, and it's a billion-dollar industry. So we're talkin' about money. How to make money off of a sexual idea. "Yeah, you can go out and fuck anybody you want now; just take this pill." You know? And it puts that in a person's mind: "Yeah, if I take a pill..." But who knows what those pills do to a person? I think they're gonna be passé. But they've caused a lot of damage, a lot of damage.

KL: So it's the man's responsibility? Vasectomy's the best way?

BD: I think so. A man don't wanna get a woman pregnant, then he's gotta take care of it. Otherwise, that's just ultimate abuse, you know? But the problem is not abortion. The problem is the whole concept behind abortion. Abortion is the end result of going out and screwing somebody to begin with. Casual sex.

KL: But the abortion question is: Is it taking a life? Is it a woman's decision?

BD: Well, if the woman wants to take that upon herself, I figure that's her business. I mean, who's gonna take care of the baby that arrives – these people that are callin' for no abortion?

KL: In regard to these feminist sympathies...

BD: I think women rule the world and that no man has ever done anything that a woman either hasn't allowed him to do or encouraged him to do.

KL: In that regard, there's a song on *Infidels* called *Sweetheart Like You*, in which you say, "A woman like you should be at home... takin' care of somebody nice."

BD: Actually, that line didn't come out exactly the way I wanted it to. But, uh... I could easily have changed that line to make it not so overly, uh, tender, you know? But I think the concept still woulda been the same. You see a fine-lookin' woman walking down the street, you start goin', "Well, what are you doin' on the street? You're so fine, what do you need all this for?"

KL: A lot of women might say they're on the street because they're on the way to their jobs.

BD: Well, I wasn't talkin' to that type of woman. I'm not talkin' to Margaret Thatcher or anything.

KL: Are you in love at the moment?

BD: I'm always in love.

KL: Would you ever marry again? Do you believe in the institution?

BD: Yeah, I do. I don't believe in divorce. But I'm a strong believer in marriage.

KL: One last question. I think a lot of people take you for a pretty gloomy character these days, just judging by your photos. Why reinforce that image by calling this latest album *Infidels*?

BD: Well, there were other titles for it. I wanted to call it *Surviving in a Ruthless World*. But someone pointed out to me that the last bunch of albums I'd made all started with the letter s. So I said, "Well, I don't wanna get bogged down in the letters." And then Infidels came into my head one day. I don't know what it means, or anything.

KL: Don't you think when people see that title, with that sort of dour picture on the front, they'll wonder, "Does he mean us?"

BD: I don't know. I could've called the album *Animals* and people would've said the same thing. I mean, what would be a term that people would like to hear about themselves?

KL: How about *Sweethearts*?

BD: *Sweethearts*. You could call an album that. *Sweethearts*.

KL: With a big smiling picture?

BD: Yeah.

Although the full transcript of the Kurt Loder interview doesn't circulate, John Bauldie added two further excerpts from it in Rod MacBeath's article "Looking Up Dylan's Sleeves" in the Telegraph no. 53.

On page 33 of #53, there's an additional couple of questions by Loder on Saved and Dylan's response.

On pp. 40-41, there's a much fuller response to Loder's question on the meaning of *Infidels*.

KL: Did the title of that album reflect the way you felt about yourself?

BD: Do you think you're saved?

BD: The title of that album could have been another title. Titles are tricky things. We could have called that album *Solid Rock* and had a picture of Moses standing with the Ten Commandments, you know what I mean? We could have done a lot of things. But I thought the cover was wonderful. In fact, we wanted to have it posted up on Sunset Boulevard, you know, and it caused a big stir. Big bloody hand reaching down. Tony Wright did it. He's a very good artist. Very good artist. Saved. A person never knows if he's saved or not. It's not for one person to say. I know people who say they are saved, and at a certain moment you may be. But that moment changes from day to day. But at any particular time and place, yeah. You may feel that that's the case, saved from the fire of damnation.

On Infidels, Loder asked Dylan why he had chosen that title and Dylan responded -

BD: I don't know. There were other titles for it. I wanted to call my next album, whenever I made it, *Surviving In A Ruthless World*. I wanted to call it that. Before we even went into the studio, "The next album I do I'm gonna call *Surviving in a Ruthless World*". But something was holding me back from it, because for some reason... somebody pointed out to me that the last bunch of albums that I made all started with the letter S. And I'd say, "Is that right?" There must be a story or something. I didn't want to do another one beginning with S just f for superstitious reasons. I didn't want to get bogged down in the letter S whatever the letter S stands for. And this Infidels came out, just came into my head one day, I guess. This was after we had that album done that it just came in my head that this is the right title for this album. I mean, I don't know any more about it than anybody else really. I did it. I did the album, and I call it that, but what it means is for other people to interpret, you know, if it means something to them. Infidels is a word that's in the dictionary and whoever it applies to... to everybody on the album, every character. Maybe it's all about infidels.

On the possibility preferred by Loder that people would interpret the album title as being aimed at them, Dylan said:

BD: I don't know. I could have called the album *Animals*, and people would have said the same thing. I mean, what would be a term that people would like to hear about themselves?

28or29 May 1984
Michael Carwood interview

Source: *Step into the Arena*

Michael Carwood heard Dylan in Verona, and asked him about his Slane concert
INFIDEL BOB KEEPS THE FANS' FAITH

THE TIMES may be a-changin', but 43-year-old Bob Dylan is still a major attraction in Europe. I was one of almost 40,000 who braved the cold and rain of the ancient Italian city of Verona on Monday and Tuesday last week to witness the return of perhaps the most influential rock songwriter of the past two decades.

It is his first tour in eight years and follows the release of the highly acclaimed "Infidel" album which sees Dylan back in great rocking mood. The success of "Infidels" has obviously attracted a whole new generation to Dylan's music for there was quite a few young fans interspersed with ageing hippies who came to relieve their youth with their idol from the 'sixties.

The 2,000 year old amphitheatre with its marvelous acoustics, proved a magnificent setting and as darkness descended you could feel the atmosphere increasing. Carlos Santana and his band deserve much of the credit for this. They were in superb form and their special blend of rock, latin rhythms and soul was just what the doctor ordered to take minds off the chilling winds and thundery showers that at one stage threatened this spectacular outdoor show.

By the time Dylan walked out on stage the fans were like alcoholics waiting on a drink. Yet his entrance was so low key it almost caught most of them by surprise. Dressed in a black leather jacket and blue denim jeans and wearing a straw hat, he hardly seemed to have changed at all. His pale, unshaven face is certainly wearing its age well and as the fans greeted him with a roar usually reserved for football teams, you could almost see a half smile break out on his face.

With the sound problems of the first night at last sorted out, he looked almost relaxed in front of a backing quartet that included such notables as Ian McLagen, the ex-Faces keyboard wizard and former Rolling Stones guitarist Mick Taylor as they swept into "Jokerman" from the latest album. The overall group sound was rather loose but then Dylan, I suspect, isn't the easiest of artists to back and anyway the fans didn't seem to notice.

By the time he launched into "Just Like A Woman" he was in control. In an arena where in Roman times the Emperor enjoyed himself by feeding Christians to the lions, Dylan too was in total command as he fed his message to the masses. It didn't seem to matter that few among his audience were English speaking . He came, he sang and he conquered.

When he took a brief breather and allowed bassist Gregg Sutton to take over on vocals for the old Muddy Waters' classic "I got my mojo working", the backing quartet suddenly seemed much more together but then Dylan returned and began an acoustic set which apart from allowing his fellow musicians a break, also turned out to be the highlight of the show.

He began with "It ain't me babe" which was followed by "It's alright ma" and the best of all, "Don't think twice". It was greatly appreciated but alas, was all too brief.

The band returned and they rocked well into the early hours of the morning with "Maggie's Farm", "Masters of War" and "Like a Rolling Stone" before he said good night with a moving version of "Blowin' in the Wind" with, it seemed, almost the entire audience holding up lighted matches or lighters. In the darkness, way past the midnight hour, it was a breathtaking sight.

Earlier that day he had told me how much he was looking forward to his second visit in Ireland. **"In my early folk days I was influenced by Irish traditional music, especially the**

Clancy brothers and the McPeake family from Belfast. Indeed I still listen to them from time to time." He explained, adding **"I enjoyed my last visit there."**

His Irish date at Slane Castle on July 8 is the last date of the European tour, after which he is considering some dates in the U.S.

Talking about his choice of songs Dylan admitted he prefers the old ones. He said, "Blowing in the Wind" was a special song for him, though he said that if he just had to sing one song it would be "Song to Woody".

Although he wouldn't admit it, it was quite obvious he dislikes meeting the press. You could be forgiven for thinking his lack of co-operation and crisp one worded replies was just plain rudeness on his part. But one of his closest aides, Monaghan man Jim Callaghan, who is in charge of Dylan's security, insists it's shyness.

"You have no idea how shy the man is" he told me. "I have never quite met anyone like him," he added.

He is also very insecure. He admits he doesn't feel safe and when asked what he most looks forward to, he stressed, **"Waking up in the morning. I just can't wait to start another day".**

Inevitably the subject of John Lennon was introduced and Dylan's assessment of the former Beatle is interesting: **"He was true to his work and his cause. He played his heart out".**

He hinted that his religious beliefs have changed again, though he seemed reluctant to go too deep into the subject. When it was suggested that, because there were not many religious songs in his programme on this tour, his beliefs may have changed slightly since the "Saved" album, **"maybe"** was his only reply.

When pressed in what direction, he added, **"In different ways,"** but still was reluctant to elaborate, though he did say truth and mercy are the most important qualities a person could have.

But still he had no mercy for the press. Are you bored with interviews, he was asked. **"Oh no, I love them",** he replied with a broad grin. When somebody else asked if he could think of anything worse he retorted immediately **"Oh yes, going fishing".**

29 May 1984
Verona Press Conference, Hotel Ville Cortine, Sirmione, Italy

Source: *Talkin' Bob Dylan…(1984)*, pp. 3-11.

Q: Have you changed your religious beliefs since the last tour, since you toured here three years ago?
BD: Since when?
Q: I wondered if your religious beliefs have changed since the 'Saved' album three years ago?
BD: Hmm, well, maybe, slightly.
Q: In what way?
BD: In... er... different ways.
Q: You don't sing that many of the so-called religious songs on this tour?
BD: What... would... I should do more? Would you like me to do more?
Q: Well, I don't know really, I just wanted to...
BD: Yeah.
Q: ...know if, it seems like through the latest album that your religious...
BD: Well, every tour is different you know, and each show is different. It's always, uh, they change, from this year to last year. Probably two years ago, you would have seen a different show.
Q: Why not a US tour? You are going to the United States after Europe?
BD: Mmm, probably.
Q: How did the collaboration between you come together?
CS: Grace.
Q: I mean what started it?
CS: Grace.
Q: When and why did you decide to go on this tour?
BD: Well you know, you don't have any control, you just play it where you're booked.
Q: Doesn't that make you feel like a prisoner?
BD: Yeah sure, uh-huh.
Q: How do you feel after the concert of last night?
BD: I was pretty tired last night, I didn't get too much sleep.
Q: Did you like the concert you made?
BD: Sounded alright. We had some sound problems. Should be even better tonight, they should have them fixed by now.
Q: Bill Graham said that rock music today is a question of entertainment more than before. Do you think that's right, do you feel the same way?
BD: Well, there's an element of entertainment in rock music
Q: What about the social and political matters? Are they as strong for you as they were?
BD: Oh yeah, it's always been strong for me.
Q: What about what you mentioned before, about problems with the sound; a lot of people think they would like to listen to you alone with the acoustic guitar.
BD: Yeah.
Q: Carlos, do you play for yourself or for the public?
CS: I would like to answer another question by answering this one at the same time. A little while ago somebody asked us about religion and this kind of stuff. About two years ago in Buffalo, New York, a critic wrote down something that ex.. spelled out a lot of things. He said, it doesn't matter to me where Bob Dylan or Pete Townsend or Santana or George Harrison or anybody gets their inspiration, as long as I get it from them. That to me sums up a lot of the things. When I play, I play mainly for inspiration. It's like a bird you know, you have to fly, the wings of inspiration. Bob Dylan inspired me, John

Coltrane inspired me, and when I play, I play for myself, but I also play to touch the hearts of the listeners.

Q: What do you feel when you're on stage?

BD: Well some nights you feel, you know, you feel good, other nights you feel not so good. You try to make it so nobody really knows how you feel.

Q: What do you feel, not how do you feel?

BD: What do you feel? Well it depends, you know, it depends on a lot of feelings, on many things. Depending on what song you sing, you know, you feel differently about everything. Every song takes you to a different feeling, you feel differently on every song.

Q: Do you like a press conference?

BD: I'd rather do things, you know, one on one, you know.

Q: Once you wrote a song about dodging lions in the coliseum. Last night you played in the Verona Coliseum, did you see any lions around?

BD: Yeah, well I felt that there could have been some there, one time.

Q: Feel more safe now?

BD: Not really.

Q: Did you enjoy the audience?

BD: Oh it was great. Great crowd you know.

Q: Your approach now is very much rock n' roll, isn't it? I mean. this is the smallest band you've ever toured with?

BD: Probably, uh-huh.

Q: How long have you been rehearsing?

BD: Awww, about two or three days.

Q: Was that to save money? For what reason, just three days?

BD: Oh, that's a lot, three days!

Q: Why did you choose these musicians?

BD: No particular reason, really. They just understand my songs you know, know how to play them.

Q: What was the exact problem with the sound?

BD: Oh, monitor problems. I'd like to tour with an Italian band when we come back.

Q: *The Times They Are A Changin'*...which direction at the moment, do you feel... what's happening in the States where you come from?

BD: Are they changing? Oh, in many ways, changing, they're changing every day. By the time you say how they've changed, they've already changed again... yeah.

Q: What are your feelings about Reagan?

BD: Hmm, my feelings? Well, he's the President. I've never met him, I don't know, I've never met him.

Q: Have you got any special thing to say to the teenagers of today?

BD: Mmm, nothing that they wouldn't hear at the show.

Q: Why are we here then?

BD: Who? Why am I here, I don't know why I'm here.

Q: Where do the musicians come from, Allen, Sutton?

BD: Where are they from?, well, Gregg is from New York, and Colin's from Britain.

Q: How did you feel when you were playing '*Blowin' In The Wind*' at the end?

CS: To me it was very special. Usually when you play with somebody like Bob, who is a law unto himself, you have to learn how to get used to it.

Q: What do have in common?

CS: I think basically we're both hungry, we both feel cold, we both feel inspired, we both...

BD: We both eat, we both sleep.

Q: Bob, you agree?

BD: Yeah.

Q: I want to resolve one problem. How when you came to Rome in the beginning of the 1960's, how did it end up, what was the conclusion of that?
BD: Mmmm, the conclusion, I don't remember (laughter)... **Sophia Loren... is she here?**
Q: Is it true you had a very nice time in Italy the first time, nobody trying to...
BD: Yeah it was great the first time, nobody bothered me at all.
Q: (from female reporter!) What did you do when you ran away from home?
BD: I was trying to... find her! (mistranslated as 'He was trying to find himself!')
Q: What does it mean to escape?
BD: Well, you never escape and you can't run away.
Q: We've come from Ireland. Has traditional Irish folk music had any influence on your writing?
BD: Oh yeah, very much so, mmm.
Q: Like who?
BD: Uh... McPeake Family, and The Clancy Brothers... have you heard of the McPeake Family?
Q: Yes indeed, from Belfast.
BD: Mmm, I used to listen to them all the time.
Q: (undecipherable)
BD: Yeah, once in a while.
Q: Have you any reminiscences about Ireland?
BD: Sure. Well, I've got a lot of reminiscences I'd rather not say.
Q: Why have you never written songs about the Irish political situation?
BD: I'm not really that familiar with it.
Q: Joan Baez said 15 days ago that you never really were interested in politics, is that true?
BD: Well… that's true.
Q: Do you think that you have disappointed some people who've seen you as a sort of political prophet, and especially the younger generation?
BD: Mmmm, perhaps.
Q: Last night there didn't seem to be many thirty year olds, but there were a lot of very young people there, how do you explain this?
BD: I don't know.
Q: Is there anything that you know for sure?
BD: Huh? (suggestion from the press.. 'nothing')... **Nothing!**
Q: Is it true that you prefer to play your old songs, or new songs?
BD: Yeah.. I prefer to play the old songs. But you know, once a song is written it's already old.
Q: After twenty years of success and public life, what is it that still turns you on, brings you feelings?
BD: Oh, you know, just waking up in the morning. I just can't wait to see another day.
Q: Bob, you once said that your old songs played with the acoustic guitar were flat and boring, and you wouldn't want to play them no more?
BD: I never said that, no...no.
Q: In the 60's you said they were flat and boring, now you've started playing them again, what has changed?
BD: I don't know, something must have changed though.
Q: Since you admired Woody Guthrie so much, did you ever... during the 60's, feel like a Woody Guthrie, a man with his guitar against the establishment, did you ever feel like Woody Guthrie?
BD: Yeah, I feel like Woody Guthrie right now!
Q: Did you get angry at the old story about the man who went through your garbage to prove you sold yourself out to capitalism?
BD: Hmm… a little bit.
Q: Allen Ginsberg said you sold yourself out, but only to God?

BD: Uh, that's hard to say. I don't know how much God would pay for me.
Q: How much has your own experience of other people's art influenced your own personal attitude?
BD: Well,... other people's art? I'm influenced by other people's art, but I'm more influenced by... just life.
Q: You think your art influences other people's lives?
BD: Oh, I think so, yeah...No… maybe... what did he say? did he say life? I think my art influences other people's heart!
Q: Personal lives?
BD: Oh, that'd be for them to say.
Q: Would you like your art to influence other people's personal life?
BD: Umm... I don't think I've ever taken it that far.
Q: Do you consider rock n' roll music being an art form at all?
BD: Well, some people say it is. You know, it depends, some people say it's not.
Q: What do you think?
BD: I think it is.
Q: I understand that had been recording with Mick Taylor & Jack Bruce in 1982. What became of those recordings, and was it the material that later became '*Infidels*'?
BD: I'm not sure what happened to that... stuff.
Q: What kind of songs were they?
BD: Maybe one of Jack Bruce's songs, I don't know.
Q: Let's be serious. Since we're all here, other than the concerts and the music, what is it you have to tell us?, what do you want us to know?
BD: Nothing!... I'm just here to play the show!
Q: Do you talk in the same way to your children?
BD: Eh, what's that question? They never ask me stuff like this!
Q: You give the impression that you are totally bored with what's going on here, and that you really don't want to be here?
BD: No, that's not true, this is exciting!
Q: You enjoy the press conference?
BD: Very much.
Q: What was the last, book you've read, the last film you've seen, the last record you listened to?
BD: Okay, let's see... the last record, I think I heard a Grace Jones record last time.
Q: And the book and film?
BD: ...and the book... I've read the Bible.
Q: A film?
BD: ...and a film was... uh... 'Shane'.
Q: Could you please let us know three things in which you believe?
BD: Love truth and mercy.
Q: Bob, have you a private life? I mean, can you go in the streets alone and buy your bread like everybody?
BD: Yeah, I definitely buy bread, (laughing) **definitely.**
Q: Carlos Santana, why is this association with Dylan, playing with Bob on stage?
BD: (interrupts) **Carlos and I go way back into the 60's. This isn't anything new. We're from the same era, this music's all from the same era.. right?**
Q: What do you remember about John Lennon?
BD: Oh… John Lennon, oh... Well, he was true to his work, you know. True to his, his cause. He played his heart out, you know... very well.
Q: Did you ever imagine yourself as you are now when you were twenty?
BD: Yeah.
Q: And how would you describe yourself now?
BD: Just me!

Q: When you pick songs for your tours, do you pick your own favorite songs or are they part of the concert?

BD: Well yeah, they're usually the same. The ones that I wanna play and the ones that people wanna hear. I never had a problem picking songs.

Q: What is your favorite song? If you had to sing one, what would it be?

BD: Which one would you come to hear me do? The one they'd come to hear me do.

Q: (translating)... he wants to know the answer precisely...

BD: That's...okay... 'Song To Woody'.

Q: What do you think of electronic music?

BD: Huh?

Q: What do you think of electronic music?

BD: I don't care for it personally.

Q: What did you experience, and what did you think of Jimi Hendrix?

BD: Oh, I loved… I loved Jimi Hendrix. But you know, of all the big guitar players, there's only a handful... Carlos is up there with all of them.

Q: What I really want to know is what you experienced when Jimi Hendrix did 'All Along The Watchtower'?

BD: Oh, that was a good version, I liked that yeah, yeah.

Q: What do you feel when you sing and people go crazy for your old songs and don't go crazy the same way for new songs?

BD: Yeah, it's disappointing sometimes, but what can you do, you know?

Q: You say you have to do it?

BD: You gotta do it, I mean you can just...

Q: You're still very productive these days. To my ears, the 'Infidels' album is the best one for a long time. Are you in a more proactive phase, with an optimistic outlook... (undecipherable)...

BD: I didn't get that?

Q: (translating) He would like to know if you would prefer to be free to go sightseeing and walk around the streets of Verona and Sirmione, and if you'd prefer that rather than being here?

BD: No it doesn't matter.

Q: About your film 'Renaldo & Clara'. Was the film successful in the sense that it was a kind of exorcism for you, that it was a way for you to exorcise your personal demons and to resolve your contradictions... and your masks?

BD: A few of 'em (laughs)**.**

Q: If you don't like the questions, what about a thirty second photo session outside?

BD: Not me, I don't particularly like people to know what I look like.

Q: What would you do if you met yourself in the street?

BD: I don't know, I'd probably cross the street!

Q: Do you worry about what the critics say about your music and your songs? Do you want to achieve things that are better than what the critics think?

BD: Yeah, I do. Just some critics like you and some don't, you know. That's just, I guess, the way it is.

Q: Is there something that bores you more than a press conference?

BD: To what?

Q: Is there anything that bores you more than a press conference?

BD: Going fishing (laughs)**.**

Q: When you were in Copenhagen the first time, in '66, you started the press conference by asking a lot of questions, like how long does it take to go on horseback to Hamlet's castle...

BD: Yeah…

Q: You may not remember that?

BD: Oh, I do.

Q: Why did you ask that question, as I was there?
BD: I needed to know.
Q: Did you go riding on a horseback?
BD: No.
Q: What do you remember from Copenhagen? You play next week in Copenhagen. What do you remember from Copenhagen? You've been there two or three times.
BD: Isn't there a... there's water around there, huh? yeah.
Q: Bob, just recently you wrote that democracy does not rule the world?
BD: Right.
Q: That's not very optimistic, but I'd like to hear your comments?
BD: Well it might not be optimistic, but it's realistic. I'd rather be a realist than an optimist.
Q: What can we do about it?
BD: I don't know... I'm not sure. Well, but we like the world ruled by violence. We don't want the world ruled by democracy.
Q: What is different in this European tour, can you already feel something different in this?
BD: That's something different?
Q: Well, I ask you?
BD: Hmm, I know there is...
Q: Have you started working on a new album?
BD: Yeah, yeah, I just started.
Q: Which musicians are you using...
Q: One last word Bob Dylan, the last word?
BD: Yeah, what is it, what's the word?
Q: You have to say it!.
BD: I have to say it? Oh, the last word… God! I'd like to add, I'm just grateful that anybody. showed up at all, at the shows, at the shows and at the press conference.

31 May 1984
Press Conference, Hamburg, Germany

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 473-479.

In the summer of 1984 Dylan undertook an ambitious tour with Carlos Santana. Joan Baez sang on the same bill at a number of concerts but they only sang on stage together at Hamburg and Munich. There were only two press conferences during the tour, at Verona and Hamburg.

This press conference took place in the Clubhouse of St. Pauli Stadium in Hamburg in the middle of Joan Baez's performance. If you listen to the tape, you can hear her singing in the background. Dylan and Carlos Santana are present from the beginning and Baez joins part way through almost as if by accident and, listening to Dylan's contribution, she offers to do a "serious press conference". There were persistent rumors that Bob Dylan and Joan Baez did not see eye-to-eye during this tour and the "between-the-lines" comments do nothing to refute this. Dylan looks tired and even sick and complains of lack of sleep and he is not very attentive to the questions.

Like many press conferences the live tape can be very confusing in places, particularly where there are foreign languages, sound drops and various interruptions. To assist me in getting the best possible transcript, I have used the circulating tape but have also leant heavily on the booklet *Talkin' Bob Dylan* (1984) by, I believe, Gavin Diddle.

CS = Carlos Santana; JB = Joan Baez; PC = Question from conference floor.

PC: Mr. Dylan, you sing a lot of the old songs. Do you still have the old feelings when you sing them?

BD: Oh absolutely.

PC: No?

BD: More so now.

PC: What do you want to say when you sing the old songs, or is it just a compliment for the public?

BD: I wanna say this what's in the songs, you know. A few of the songs I've changed the lyrics to, bringing them more up to date, you know.

PC: How do you feel being on stage again with Joan Baez?

BD: I haven't been on the stage with Joan yet. It hasn't happened yet, but I'm sure it will be a wonderful experience.

PC: Are there other singers you would like to sing with?

BD: Mm, sure... Elvis Presley.

PC: Will you keep the band you have now on tour, or is it just for this tour?

BD: Well, what.. that's hard to say, you know.

PC: Do you think you have been lucky to get that band?

BD: This band? Oh, I'm always lucky to get any band.

PC: It is said that your '77 concert in Nuremberg was one of your most beautiful. What do you feel... how do you feel coming back to Germany?

BD: Well, we just got here today, you know, so it's still hard to tell. I just woke up a little while ago.

PC: Why did you decide to make a European tour?

BD: No particular reason... it's just, you know, you know, doing this, you just play all over, all over the place.

PC: Do you think it's possible the two of you, you will sing with Joan Baez?
BD: Well, it's possible. I'm not sure if it's likely, but it's possible.
PC: Mr. Santana, I saw you in Verona playing with Bob Dylan and I... (inaudible)
CS: Yeah, the real food is when we play music, and especially with another musician like Bob. The audience, they should be commended, they stayed for more than four, five hours it seems, like, in the cold, and they didn't want us to go, and I didn't want to go. But hopefully next time, we won't go, and if somebody needs to go, they can go, and the rest of the people who want to play should play; because we have, I feel like we have a deep reservoir, you know, of inspiration. And people who run out, they should go home, and people who do have inspiration left to play, they should stay and play.
PC: I have a question. Will you keep this formation you have now?
CS: I beg your pardon... that was to Bob or for me?
PC: To you... will you stay with this formation?
CS: You mean with the band? Sure, I love to. I love these musicians. They're all individuals, great individuals in their own right, they inspire me all the time, so... ah, a great family, thank you.
PC: How did you get together with Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare for the last record?
BD: Mm, it just happened.
PC: You wrote a song *I And I*...
BD: *I And I*...!
PC: You write rastafarian music too?
BD: Is that?... Could be.
PC: Is touring still such a big thrill for you as it was in the early days?
BD: What?
PC: Is touring still such a big thrill for you as it was in the early days?
BD: Oh yeah.
PC: Thrill or bore?
BD: Eh?
PC: A thrill or a bore?
BD: Oh it's a thrill.
PC: You look a bit tired.
PC: Bob Dylan, could you try to explain the stupid reactions to *Slow Train Coming* and *Sla*... uh, *Saved*? That... the stupid reaction we had, for example, here in the press?
BD: Ah, who's that singing (Baez can be heard performing in the background)**? *Slow Train* was a big album, yeah. I don't know what was in the press here about it, but *Slow Train* did all right. I think *Saved* was a little light, you know. Some are big, some aren't, you know.**
PC: Mr Dylan, how do you feel about the American Freeze Movement and the German Peace Movement here and in the world?
BD: Well, I heard about that, yeah.
PC: So what do you feel about it, I mean what do you know about it?
BD: Ah... is there missiles here?... There's miss... yeah, yeah (sighs deeply)**, ah well, I'd probably... I probably wouldn't want them in my backyard either, you know.**
PC: Do you consider any political activities for yourself? I mean as you were a protest singer?
BD: No. I might have been a protest singer, but I've always... never been, you know, into politics, whatever.
PC: In rock n' roll and reggae, there's a lot of politics?
BD: Yeah, there might be, there might be some. Well, you can make anything politic... political, you know. You can turn a love song, you know, a love song can be political too.
PC: Do you wish your lyrics would have any effect?
BD: Was that to me?
PC: Yes.

BD: To have effect... oh sure!
PC: Could you specify that please?
BD: The effect?... Well, they affect me, so I don't know, maybe they affect somebody else... (sighs)**.**
PC: Did you sleep last night?
BD: No. You know how it is on these tours. So much going on, you know, it's just so hard to get some sleep.
PC: I presume you two will play together with Joan Baez tonight. Has there been any time to... to practise before. Would it be just like friends playing the first time together?
CS: I'm sorry, can you repeat the question again? I thought you were asking him. This is... What did you say?
PC: Did you practice before? You are playing together; do you improvise?
CS: All the time as much as possible. We rehearse the band enough time to get acquainted with... I'm a believer that freedom comes from discipline, so first you gotta have discipline, consistency and regularity in your rehearsal, and once you become acquainted with each other, then you can do anything that you want to, because you have confidence... in what you're there for, and in what the musicians can do. So yeah, I rehearsed enough to... when I come here I can maintain a standard as a professional, yeah.
PC: The question was, whether or not you rehearsed with Joan Baez before you played with her today?
CS: No, I never... But it was fun, I was delighted.
PC: Is it fun to play with Bob Dylan too?
CS: Oh, it's a deep honor to play with Bob Dylan. Mm, I mean, I'm looking forward to making it even more fun. At least for my part, for him you know, and for the rest of the audience, you know. That's all we can do, is really to serve and enhance and make people happy & touch 'em, the way you people touch us, which are our convictions, and your beliefs.
PC: Mr Dylan, how many songs does it take you to wake up on stage?
BD: Oh, maybe six.
PC: How many do you play, five?
BD: (Laughs)**.**
PC: Mr Dylan, do you have any aims?
BD: Who?... oh-oh...
PC: Mr Santana, why are you wearing a hat like that?
CS: For the same reason you're wearing a dress like that, or a... pants like that. It's... they're neat, nice colors, keep my head warm.
PC: That's all?.
CS: So far.
BD: OK? Is there any more questions?
PC: I didn't get my answer.
PC: Do you listen to any contemporary rock music now? What kind of music do you listen to?.
BD: Let's see... listen... is that for Carlos or me?
PC: For you Mr Dylan.
BD: Oh. What music do I listen to?
PC: Yeah.
BD: Oh, I listen to just about anything.
PC: There's been happening a lot, say, for the last five years in rock music. What do you think about it. Do you follow the new...
BD: Yeah, well...
(Applause as Joan Baez arrives)
BD: This woman can really talk, so all...

PC: Why can't you?
BD: I don't know. I've never, uh, practiced it.
PC: What means pleasure to you?
BD: Huh?
PC: What means pleasure to you?
JB: (to Dylan) What do you want to do?
BD: What do I like to do? Oh... I like to dance and I like to sing.
JB: This an open press conference? Can anybody ask anybody what they want?
PC: Bob's a bit sleepy.
JB: How long has it been going on?
PC: Twenty minutes.
JB: Really?
PC: Did you like the Hamburg audience?
JB: They're superb.
PC: And in comparison to the Italian audience, what's the difference?
JB: To the which?
PC: Italians.
JB: They're a little less hysterical, but they're certainly as bright.
PC: Did you expect to see more young people in the audience?
JB: My German audiences are, like, are young. This is a young audience, I think, for me, you have to remember, young for Bob too.
JB: Happy Birthday Bob!
PC: How do you come along together, the two of you?
JB: Pardon?
PC: How do you get along with each other?
JB: I don't know, I haven't seen him in two years, and before that, I hadn't seen him in five years. We probably don't get along too well if see each other more, (laughs). How do we get along Bob?
BD: Oh, fabulous.
PC: A question to all three of you, whoever wants to answer. Do you think you will get the next generation of audience and public? You are looking into the audience, maybe looking into the audience, maybe it's the 30's or 40's, no?
JB: It's not. I would assume that it would be, and I would think it would be for Bob, and I would think it might be for Carlos. But you better look again. There's some of course our age...
BD: There's a lot of people our age.
PC: Yeah.
JB: But in the audience there're also a lot of very young people.
PC: But it's difficult for them to find a babysitter when they're going to go to a festival?
BD: That's true, that's right.
PC: Miss Baez, would you comment on the American Freeze movement? I asked Bob Dylan that question before.
JB: I think the American Freeze Movement is the only movement big enough to call an actual movement, and I think that the useful thing about it... see ya Bob... the useful thing about it is that it, umm, helps some people who are very frightened of talking about disarmament in any way that sounds like unilateral, and so it introduced middle class middle class America to talking about disarmament. People who are too terrified to think about it before. The thing about it that isn't... that I'm not quite comfortable with is that it isn't enough. Now it doesn't really... if you can do it from your living room, it's probably not gonna stop... World War III.
PC: What you just said is that more knowledge or awareness of nuclear threat is needed?
JB: Yeah, and that's useful. Definitely.
PC: But that's something you can do from your living room?

JB: Yes, and then the problem is that it's not just... We could dismantle everything magically in a period of six months, but if we didn't change our basic assumptions that we all work on, which are that it's okay to kill each other, then we could build them all up again in... a year, or however long it takes.
PC: Bob, which period in your career are you most satisfied with?
BD: Mm, this one right now.
PC: You make music for so long a time, is it not the moment for you to give it up? What's the end to your career?
BD: Huh? I hope it's not... Oh, every day.
PC: Bob, are you Christian or Jewish?
BD: Well, that's hard to say.
PC: Some more?
BD: It's a long story.
PC: I'd like to know it.
BD: It'd take too long to tell you.
PC: Mr. Dylan, you wrote... rumor has it that you wrote some songs for The Clash and The Psychedelic Furs, is that true? Why did you choose those two new bands, er... to write a song for?
BD: Is that a question, was that a question?
PC: It is, yes.
BD: Do I like the Psychedelic Furs?
JB: Why did you write songs for them? Did you write songs for them?
PC: The Psychedelic Furs told in an interview that you sent them a song.
BD: Oh, I can't remember.
JB: If anybody is interested in a serious press conference, I'd be happy to stay for ten minutes, okay?
BD: Joan's gonna stay and answer some more questions.
JB: That's right. Whichever you like.
PC: Joan Baez, you know him for a really long time. Why is it so difficult to have some answers?
JB: I've known Bob for a long time, and I've never tried to understand him... and I've never shared a press conference with him (laughing).
PC: You'll never do it again?
JB: No, I'll never do it again (laughing).
PC: Is he like that in private life?
JB: I don't know that either. Literally, I never see him.
PC: Carlos Santana, have you played together with Joan Baez – first time on stage now in Hamburg?
CS: We played before. She took the time to invite me to perform for some prisoners in Soledad, and, um, we had a lot of fun. I enjoy being and playing and offering and receiving from Joan Baez.
PC: Do you have the same sort of political engagements as Joan Baez?
CS: No.
PC: Same spiritual?
CS: Same spiritual, uh. We have different ways of doing it, but I'd rather change the world by being an example, rather than by opening my mouth and just pointing out fingers and stuff like that.
JB: I open my mouth a lot, he's right!
PC: Joan Baez, what do you think about Jackson, the candidate?
JB: Jesse Jackson?
PC: Yeah.
JB: Well, I started off when Jesse started to run, I didn't like Jesse, just because I knew him years ago and I didn't trust him. But he started to say things, I liked almost every thing he

said. He was refreshing, he wasn't lying, he even admitted when he made a mess, you know, which is very rare. So, I think he's... was a refreshing element in the campaign.

PC: Will he play an important part in either getting his vote to Hart or to Mondale?

JB: He probably will. Quite honestly, for the last few weeks I have not even followed that... chase.

PC: Do you think he'll damage the Democrats chances?

JB: I don't know, I don't know, I'm very poor at predicting party politics.

PC: Do you endorse any candidates?

JB: No I never have.

PC: Did you ever get an invitation to The White House?

JB: Well, I've been to The White House a couple of times, but not under this administration. (laughing). If there are no more questions, thank you. That was fine.

PC: For your common part of the show tonight, do you have any certain titles, or will you improvise?

JB: For which common part?

PC: Will you have a common part on the stage with Bob Dylan?

JB: I hope so, I have, this is the first I've seen... of Bob.

PC: Since two years really? And Fritz Rau told us it had been... he had no close call when he tried to bring you together, is that right?

JB: Yeah, basically, Bob was touring with Carlos...

PC: You trust him, but...

JB: No, no, it's true, Bob was touring with Carlos, and I had invited Bob myself to come to Europe. He said no, he's working with Carlos. Then it turned out we're in the same place, and, so we decided to try, the three of us.

PC: You have come to Hamburg, sometime, er, why do you think... uh, here come only sixty thousand... er... sixteen thousand people, and in Munich will be forty thousand or so?

JB: I don't know. I don't know the answer to that.

PC: How does this reunion feel to you?

JB: A little ridiculous for starts! (laughs). We'll see what... we'll see if we can develop a little as the evening goes along. So I'd better go and see if I can... catch him and practice the songs.

PC: This moment?

JB: This moment.

PC: Thank you, good luck.

JB: Thank you, (laughs), Thank you.

CS: Thanks.

13 June 1984
Robert Hilburn Interview, West Berlin

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 257-260.

On June 13th 1984, in West Berlin, the day of the Waldbuhne concert, Dylan gave his fifth interview to Hilburn. The bulk of the interview took place in Dylan's hotel room immediately after the show. In view of their regular meetings, Dylan appears well at ease in Hilburn's company. The interview was published in the Los Angeles Times of August 5th 1984.

West Berlin – Bob Dylan has gone in less than a decade from being the most acclaimed figure in American rock to the most controversial. He has been mocked by reviewers and written off by some longtime admirers.

Many of his fans from the '60s were confused by the songwriter's late '70s embracing of born-again Christianity, and even felt betrayed by the dogmatic pronouncements that followed the *Slow Train Coming* and *Saved* albums.

Dylan – who played to wildly enthusiastic audiences in sold-out arenas during his 1974 reunion tour with The Band – stared, out at empty seats in the 2,500 capacity halls during his 1979 gospel tour. Some of those on hand even booed. Dylan has kept a low U. S. concert profile since then.

But there was no trace of hostility in Europe. His summer tour with Santana as opening act, has been a huge success attracting up to 70,000 fans in some cities.

Much of the audience has followed Dylan since the '60s and cheered most for the classic tunes, including *Blowin' In The Wind* and *Like A Rolling Stone*. But they listened politely to the new ones – including a couple from the "born-again" period.

(Dylan raised as a Jew has avoided defining his current religious beliefs. There are signs he has returned to Judaism, although at least one person close to him insists that he's simply taken a lower "born-again" profile.)

The fans here also spoke generously of Dylan as a philosopher & poet, an artist worthy of respect and attention even if he never makes another album. One scholarly looking, middle aged man at his concert here mentioned Picasso and Hemingway, in describing Dylan's artistic status.

In his hotel suite after the Waldbuhne concert, Dylan said he has learned to adjust to the highs and lows of his career.

"The reaction on the (U.S.) ***Slow Train*** **tour was disheartening at times. But it doesn't wound you because you get used to the ups and downs. You get to where the praise doesn't mean anything because it's often for the wrong reason, and it's the same with the criticism. Besides, I don't think I'll be perceived properly till 100 years after I'm gone. I really believe that. I don't think anybody has really caught on to *Blonde On Blonde* yet."**

Dylan's unorthodoxy reached humorous levels during the European Tour. Consider this dispatch by *London Express* writer Garth Pearce. He opened his coverage of the tour by saying that the shows could best be described as "unpredictable".

He wrote: "In Verona, Italian National Television was there to record just one song, *Blowin' In The Wind*, for a news program... (and) Dylan forgot to sing it. But a few nights later in Rotterdam, he not only delivered the song, but surprised everyone by dividing the audience into two groups and urging them to sing along to the chorus".

Pearce also described the confusion around the offstage Dylan. "Executives of the giant record company (CBS) have yet to meet their star" he wrote from Brussels late in the monthlong series of dates. "They suffer from the ignominy of never knowing where he is. "This is because Dylan refuses to stay at any of the lavish, well-protected hotels that have been selected in advance for the tour... When finally persuaded to make a brief appearance before television camera and the press in Germany, he spent most of the time giggling or uttering monosyllabic answers."

Dylan does move at his own chosen speed. He guards his privacy and mistrusts the media. He can be cold and elusive during interviews, but he is also capable, when relaxed, of opening up and exhibiting the insight and warmth that have characterized his most memorable songs.

In discussing his new, well-received (and generally secular) *Infidels* album last October in Los Angeles, Dylan appeared unusually open. In his hotel suite after the Waldbuhne concert, he was equally engaging. Without a new album to talk about, the conversation centered on his musical development.

At 42, Dylan still exhibits a renegade edge. Backstage at the Waldbuhne, he had paced nervously and had grumbled about the state of contemporary pop-rock. Before going on stage, Dylan looked like a renegade, sitting in a trailer and nibbling at some fruit. He wore a leather jacket and jeans.

"Music crosses every boundary there is. I just wish there was more to (American) **music now. To me, it's at an all time low. All that promise from the '60s has been lost. Everyone is chasing after that sterile synthesizer sound – all those drum machines. The** (human) **heart doesn't beat like those machines. It's out of touch. The best music is people expressing themselves – and you don't always find that on records anymore. The best singers I've heard in recent years are on the street on New York and New Orleans. There's nothing self-conscious about them. But you don't see them, cause they don't fit on cable TV."**

About the outpouring of response from fans on this tour, he said:
"A lot of the people who came to see me grew up with me. They are basically my hardcore fans. They might not agree with all the changes they've seen happen, but they've gone through phases too. I might not agree with what they've gone through either. But they're still the ones that really dominate the mood of a crowd".

In the more comfortable hotel setting, he softened his tone. He admitted enjoying Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* album, and singled out The Clash and U2 for praise. He also said he'd like to record with Willie Nelson. Mostly though, Dylan is discouraged by the mechanical anonymity of most British synthesizer groups and by the heartless commercialism of so many U.S. acts. He misses much of the raw roots music – blues, country and folk, that inspired him and formed '50s – '60s rock.

"We're constantly being bombarded by insulting and humiliating music, which people are making for you the way they make these Wonder Bread products" Dylan said, sitting in a straight-backed chair and softly strumming a guitar.

"Just as food can be bad for your system, music can be as bad for your spiritual and emotional feelings. It might taste good or clever, but in the long run it's not going to do anything for you. Haven't you ever been in your car and turned on the radio and you just couldn't find anything?"

Dylan believes that music has a therapeutic value:
"It puts you in tune with your own existence. Sometimes you really don't know how you feel, but really good music can define how you feel. It can make you feel not so much alone. That's what it has always done for me – people like Hank Williams, Bill Monroe, Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson... I'm afraid roots music is going to be obsolete the way we're going. I hope people go back to it. But most people (who make records) **don't care about feeling. They just want success".**

But wasn't Dylan after success too when he left Hibbing, Minn. eager to be the next Elvis Presley:
"Sure you want success, but there really wasn't that much to be had in those days. The business wasn't so big. I never wanted to be as big as Elvis – I read that somewhere, but I never said that. I never would have dreamed that. When I left home, I was off to see the world, I was caught up in the excitement of it all. I wasn't so much after success, but after excitement. At a certain point though, I realized I had found something musically that no-one else had found. I just stumbled onto it because I had been doing the regular stuff for a long, long time."

By "regular stuff", Dylan meant the purist tradition that dominated folk circles in the early '60s.
"When I started, I combined other peoples styles unconsciously... I crossed Sonny Terry with the Stanley Brothers with Roscoe Holcombe with Big Bill Broonzy with Woody Guthrie... all the stuff that was dear to me. Everybody else tried to do an exact replica of what they heard. I was doing it my own way because I wasn't as good technically as, say, Erik Darling, or Tom Paley. So I had to take the songs and make them mine in a different way. It was the early folk music done in a rock way, which was the first kind of music I played. On the first album, I did *Highway 51* like an Everly Brothers tune because that was the only way I could relate to that stuff."

Dylan feels lucky to have entered the pop scene during the '60s, a period of enormous musical and social upheaval:
"You can only pull out of the times what the times will give you. You create out of your experience. If your experiences are the same as the guys' next door and he ain't doin' nothin', then you aren't going to be doing much either. Everything happened so quick in the '60s. There was just an electricity in the air. It's hard to explain – I mean, you didn't ever want to go to sleep because you didn't want to miss anything. It wasn't there in the '70s and it ain't there now. If you want to really be an artist and not just be successful, you'll go and find the electricity. It's somewhere..."

17 June 1984
Antoine De Caunes Interview, Stade De L'Ouest, Nice, France

source: *Talking Bob Dylan 1984* by Gavin Diddle, pp. 22-25.

ADC: How do you see yourself today? How does it feel to be Bob Dylan in 1984?

BD: Just like '66.

ADC: It can't be exactly the same.

BD: Well, sort of the same.

ADC: Can't you be a little bit more explicit about it?

BD: Well, you have more experience, whatever your experience has been that's who you are.

ADC: Who do you like who's working in the singer/songwriting field today?

BD: Who do I like? Oh there's a bunch of people, er, Tom Waits is pretty good, er, Jonathan Richmond, have you heard of him?

ADC: Yeah.

BD: I think he's pretty good.

ADC: There's this guy who's always speaking about you, Elvis Costello.

BD: Elvis Costello, he's pretty good.

ADC: You like his lyrics?

BD: Yeah, I like "*Everyday I Write the Book*."

ADC: In the sixties and the seventies superstars were people like you, Lennon, Bowie and Jagger. Today it seems that it's more people like Michael Jackson, do you see a difference in quality, or in what people expect and demand from a star, what do you think?

BD: Well, yeah, you have to make new exciting videos, that's the big difference. I don't know.

ADC: All through your career you've always shown a strong sense of humour mixed with insolence and disrespect, is it more often to be insolent when you were a kid starting out, or when you were world famous, almost an institution?

BD: Yeah, it was easier but it's still not so hard.

ADC: When did you prefer it, at your beginnings or... when was it more funny for you?

BD: More funny?

ADC: Yeah.

BD: It's always been funny.

ADC: It still is?

BD: Yeah.

ADC: Who do you feel most close to these days, Pat Garrett or Billy the Kid? Don't say Alias.

BD: No. Well you know they're both the same man.

ADC: Did the fact that people call you a genius have any influence on your working?

BD: Well it's hard to be called a genius you know, and the problem is that you start to believe it. If you see it in the newspaper you know you start saying, genius, well, how do I act now? But I never believed that.

ADC: Do you have the same overbearing need to write today as in the days when you said if I didn't write I'd go crazy?

BD: Yeah. When your laying down trying to go to sleep thoughts go through you mind you know. You get up and go write them down.

ADC: In any case do you still take the same pleasure in writing?

BD: Well you see I write because I need something to sing. Sometimes it's painful, you know you're up days and nights, walking around you know, trying to finish this or do that, get this right, get that light right. Oh man, you know, it's never smooth, it's always uppity down you know.

ADC: How do you explain that since the beginning the French have always been fanatically enthusiastic about the words to you songs, when they usually have the reputation not to get the words to any English and American songs?

BD: Well, I studied a lot of French poets, you know when I was starting out. Apollinaire, Rimbaud, and those guys.

ADC: But the way they appreciate it do you think it might be because of the mark left by Surrealism on the tradition of French poetry?

BD: Yeah, probably, I mean I just came last. You know you just take what the last thing was. And I just came along at that Existential period of time, at that end.

ADC: Where you aware of the Surrealists when you started to write?

BD: I wasn't aware of it until I drifted into them pretty natural, it came out of the Beat poets, and then drifted into the surrealistic poets. But I did that naturally. I didn't say, I'm gonna do this or that, it just happened.

ADC: Have you felt changes in your writing technique, and if so in what periods?

BD: I think I changed in the late sixties, and then I changed probably in the late seventies.

ADC: And you will change in the late eighties?

BD: I don't think so, I don't think so. I hope so but I'm not sure I can anymore, you get tired at changing after a while.

ADC: Your initials B.D. means in French 'comic strip', would you take that as a compliment?

BD: Oh yeah, sure. B.D.? Well a lot of things in life are like that.

ADC: What do you think of the way young people might perceive music through video tapes?

BD: Well in one sense it sells records but then in another sense probably if people can sit at home and see the person singing why would they go out to see him you know. They're not gonna look as good even when they go see him. They're gonna see him sweat and see him in different angles, they're gonna see a lot of things they don't see on the video, so, you can't be so pretty. It makes you look real sanitized on the video. In reality it's never that way.

ADC: By the way who was the beautiful blonde in the "*Sweetheart*" video who was playing the Mick Taylor solo.

BD: That was Mick Taylor, wasn't it?

ADC: No!

BD: Did he change himself blonde? Oh I don't know, there's so many of them, they just come and go all the time. I don't know which one that was.

ADC: Did you feel affected in anyway at what happened in rock from '77 on. And do you think there is a link at what happened in rock music in the U.K. and in America?

BD: In the late seventies? Er, well I'm not too aware that anything too important happened in the late seventies. Except maybe The Clash, Sex Pistols, outside of that I can't think of anything.

ADC: Well you know in Europe it was the beginning of a new movement in rock music.

BD: Yeah? I didn't know that.

ADC: It didn't feel the same in the States?

BD: No I don't think so...

ADC: It's been quite a while since we've had an angry song from you, last one was maybe "*Hurricane*" on "*Desire*" or would you say "*Neighborhood Bully*" on "*Infidels*".

BD: Well you know you can only carry anger so far, a lot of angry songs can seem like very soft melodic love ballads. There could be a lot of anger beneath those.

ADC: It's evident that whatever style of music you play your taste is for real and true music, music that doesn't compromise, would you compare that definition to anyone playing today?

BD: Oh, I don't know. Yeah, the people that I mentioned, usually you know a singer/songwriter, a person who performs by himself, it's much easier for him to do that than for someone in a band, or a band. Because one person can just do it by himself, he can do anything he feels like, he doesn't have to be democratic or go voting on which

direction to take. It's very rare to find a group who all think together, who are all competent to decide what they're doing.

ADC: What are you projects for your next recording? I heard it could be an acoustic one.

BD: Well I think I'm gonna do a few acoustic things.

ADC: Not the whole recording?

BD: I don't thing so. Maybe two or three songs with guitar and harmonica.

ADC: Is there anything you used to dream of as a child that you've not been able to do or achieve, despite the fact you're Bob Dylan?

BD: Oh, I don't know, maybe go to Disneyland. I don't think about that stuff.

ADC: In 1963 you wrote "*A Hard Rain's a Gonna Fall*", do you think that one day it might finally fall and if not, how do you see yourself in ten years?

BD: I don't know, I couldn't see myself now ten years ago. Usually you can see where other people are gonna be at ten years from now but yourself it's hard to see.

ADC: And what about the rain?

BD: It's starting to fall, it has been falling for a while actually.

ADC: Thank-you very much Bob.

BD: Thanks.

The Antoine De Caunes interview was aired on French TV channel, *Antenne 2*, on 30th June 1984.

27 June 1984
Mick Brown Interview, Madrid, Spain

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 879-883.

This interview, conducted by Mick Brown, appeared in the 'Week In Focus' section of the *Sunday Times* on July 1st 1984. It took place a few days earlier, June 27th, in a café in Madrid the day after Bob's concert at the Estadio del Rayo Vallecano.

Dylan:
'Jesus, who's got time to keep up with the times?'

This week Bob Dylan comes to Britain. The folksinger-cum-folk hero of the 1960s has not always had a good reception here, in 1965 purists attacked him for "going electric". in 1981 his new-found evangelism left many of his fans cold. What should they expect this time? Last week Mick Brown had an exclusive interview.

Bob Dylan tugged at a cigarette, stroked the beginnings of an untidy beard and gazed pensively at the stream of traffic passing down the Madrid street. **"What you gotta understand,"** he said at length, **"is that I do something because I feel like doing it. If people can relate to it, that's great; if they can't, that's fine too. But I don't think I'm gonna be really understood until maybe 100 years From now. What I've done, what I'm doing, nobody else does or has done."**

The messianic tone grew more intense. **"When I'm dead and gone maybe people will realise that, and then figure it out. I don't think anything I've done has been evenly mildly hinted at. There's all these interpreters around, but they're not interpreting anything except their own ideas. Nobody's come close."**

But a lot of people, it seems, still want to. Bob Dylan may no longer sell records in the consistently enormous quantities he once did – a fact to which he will allow a tinge of regret – but his capacity to hold his audience in thrall seems undiminished.

By the time Bob Dylan arrives in Britain this week for performances at St. James's Park, Newcastle, on Tuesday and Wembley Stadium on Saturday, he will already have performed to almost half a million people throughout Europe – half a million people singing the chorus of *Blowing In The Wind*, an Esperanto that is as much a testament to Dylan's abiding influence and charisma as the insatiable interest of the world's press in his activities.

This interest is equaled only by Dylan's determination to keep his own counsel whenever possible. As Bill Graham, the tour's garrulous American promoter and Dylan's closest adviser, keeps reminding you, Bob "is not your everyday folksinger."

All the German magazine *Stern* had wanted to do was touch base for five minutes in return for a front cover. Dylan declined. The press conference that he had been persuaded to hold in Verona, attended by 150 excitable European journalists, had been a fiasco: photographers barred, and the first question from the floor – "what are your religious views nowadays?" – met by Dylan irritably brushing the table in front of him, as if to sweep aside that and all other questions to follow.

"I mean, nobody cares what Billy Joel's religious views are, right?" he tells me with a wry smile, **"what does it matter to people what Bob Dylan is? but it seems to, right? I'd honestly like to know why it's important to them."**

One expects many things of Bob Dylan, but such playful ingenuousness is not one of them.

Dylan protects himself well, not with bodyguards but with a smokescreen of privacy and elusiveness of the sort that encourages speculation and myth. Meeting him involves penetrating a frustrating maze of "perhapses" and "maybes", of cautions and briefings – suggestive of dealing with fine porcelain – culminating in a telephone call summoning you to an anonymous cafeteria filled with Spanish families who give not a second glance to the figure in a Hawaiian shirt and straw hat who at last comes ambling through the door.

He is surprisingly genial, youthful for his 43 years, lean, interested and alert, who treat the business of being Bob Dylan with an engagingly aw-shucks kind of bemusement.

It was in striking contrast to the apparition Dylan had presented the previous night, on stage in front of 25,000 people in a Madrid football stadium, his black smock coat, high boots and hawkish profile suggesting some avenging backwoods preacher.

The emphasis in his performance has shifted from the overtly evangelical songs heard in Dylan's last visit to Britain three years ago. Now it spans every phase of his 21-year career. The themes of social protest, personal love and religious faith have never been more of a piece. Dylan remains what he has always been, an uncompromising moralist. And to hear songs such as "*Masters Of War*", "*A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*" (about nuclear war), and "*Maggie's Farm*" (about rebellious labor) invested with fresh nuances of meaning, not to say vitriol, is to realise that, while the sentiments may have become unfashionable in popular music, they are no less pertinent. Nobody else is writing songs like Bob Dylan. Nobody ever did.

"For me, none of the songs I've written has really dated," he says. **"They capture something I've never been able to improve on, whatever their statement is. A song like "*Maggie's Farm*" – I could feel like that just the other day, and I could feel the same tomorrow. People say they're 'nostalgia', but I don't know what that means really. *A Tale Of Two Cities* was written 100 years ago; is that nostalgia? This term 'nostalgia', it's just another way people have of dealing with you and putting you some place they think they understand. It's just another label."**

Labels exercise Bob Dylan greatly. People have been trying to put them on him since he started, he says, **"and not one of them has ever made any sense."**

The furore about his religious beliefs puzzled him most of all, **"like I was running for Pope or something."** When the word first spread that he had eschewed Judaism and embraced Christianity, and he toured America in 1979 singing overtly religious songs, the most hostile reception came not from rock audiences but when he played university campuses, **"and the so-called intellectual students showed their true monstrous selves."**

"Born-again Christians" is just another label, he says, he had attended Bible school in California for three months, and the book was never far from his side, but the idea that faith was a matter of passing through one swing door and back out another struck him as ridiculous. **"I live by a strict disciplinary code, you know, but I don't know how moral that is or even where it comes from really. These things just become part of your skin after a while; you get to know what line not to step over – usually because you stepped over it before and were lucky to get back."**

Was he an ascetic? Dylan lit another cigarette and asked what the word meant. **"I don't think so. I still have desires, you know, that lead me around once in a while. I don't do things in**

excess, but everybody goes through those times. They either kill you, or make you a better person."

By this time in the conversation it did not seem awkward to ask: did he believe in evil?

"Sure I believe in it. I believe that ever since Adam and Eve got thrown out of the garden that the whole nature of the planet has been heading in one direction -towards apocalypse. It's all there in the *Book of Revelations*, but it's difficult talking about these things to most people because most people don't know what you're talking about, or don't want to listen."

"What it comes down to is that there's a lot of different gods in the world against the god – that's what it's about There's a lot of different gods that people are subjects of. There's the god of Mammon. Corporations are gods. Governments? No, Governments don't have much to do with it anymore, I don't think. Politics is a hoax. The politicians don't have any real power. They feed you all this stuff in the newspapers about what's going on, but that's not what's really going on."

"But then again, I don't think that makes me a pessimistic person. I'm a realist. Or maybe a surrealist. But you can't beat your head against the wall forever."

He had never, he said, been a Utopian: that was always a foreign term to him, something to do with moving to the country, living communally, and growing rice and beans. **"I mean, I wanted to grow my own rice and beans – still do – but I never felt part of that movement."**

But he could still look back on the 1960s with something approaching affection. **"I mean, the Kennedys were great-looking people, man, they had style,"** he smiles. **"America is not like that anymore. But what happened, happened so fast that people are still trying to figure it out. The TV media wasn't so big then. It's like the only thing people knew was what they knew; then suddenly people were being told what to think, how to behave, there's too much information."**

"It just got suffocated. Like Woodstock – that wasn't about anything. It was just a whole new market for tie-dyed T-shirts. It was about clothes. All those people are in computers now."

This was beyond him. He had never been good with numbers, and had no desire to stare at a screen **"I don't feel obliged to keep up with the times. I'm not going to be here that long anyway. So I keep up with these times, then I gotta keep up with the 90s. Jesus, who's got time to keep up with the times?"**

It is at moments such as this that Dylan – once, misleadingly perhaps, characterised as a radical – reveals himself as much of a traditionalist; an adherent of biblical truths; a firm believer in the family and the institution of marriage – despite his own divorce from his wife, Sara; a man disenchanted with many of the totems and values of modern life, mass communications, the vulgarity of popular culture, the "sameness" of everything. Personally he had been reading Cicero, Machiavelli and John Stuart Mill. Contemporary literature? **"Oh yeah, I read a detective story, but I can't remember what it was called."**

"At least in the 1960s it seemed there was room to be different. For me, my particular scene, I came along at just the right time, and I understood the times I was in. If I was starting out right now I don't know where I'd get the inspiration from, because you need to breathe the right air to make the creative process work. I don't worry about it so much for me; I've done it; I can't complain. But the people coming up, the artists and writers, what are they gonna do, because these are the people who change the world."

Nowadays, he admits, he finds writing harder than ever. A song like "*Masters Of War*" he would despatch in 15 minutes, and move onto the next one without a second thought. **"If I wrote a song like that now I wouldn't feel I'd have to write another one for two weeks. There's still things I want to write about, but the process is harder. The old records I used to make, by the time they came out I wouldn't even want them released because I was already so far beyond them."**

Much of his time nowadays is spent travelling. He was in Jerusalem last Autumn for his son Jesse's Bar-mitzvah – **"his grandmother's idea,"** he smiles. Israel interests him from **"a biblical point of view,"** but he had never felt that atavistic Jewish sense of homecoming. In fact he lives principally on his farm in Minnesota, not far from the town of Hibbing where he spent his adolescence. Then there is the domed house in Malibu, California, originally built to accommodate his five children – good schools nearby, he says – but which he has seldom used since his divorce, and a 63 ft sailing boat with which he cruises the Caribbean **"when I can't think of anything else to do."**

He had never contemplated retirement: the need to make money was not a factor – he is a wealthy man – but the impulse to continue writing was. **"There's never really been any glory in it for me,"** he says. **"Being seen in the places and having everybody put their arms around you, I never cared about any of that. I don't care what people think. For me, the fulfillment was always in just doing it. That's all that really matters."**

As the conversation had progressed, more and more people had realised who the man in the straw hat was. A steady stream had made their way to his table, scraps of paper in hand. Dylan had signed them all, with a surprisingly careful deliberation – almost as if he was practising – but his discomfort at being on view was becoming more apparent. As peremptorily as he arrived, Bob Dylan made his excuses and left.

1 or 2 July 1984
a Parisian café, Paris, France

Source: *The Telegraph*, #41, Winter 1991 plus countless Cohen interviews 1988-92.

Brief Encounter
LEONARD COHEN

As Leonard Cohen slaved over a hot stove in LA recently, preparing a tasty lunch for Q Magazine's Adrian Deevoy, the hungry reporter mentioned Bob Dylan's name en passant, to which Cohen replied:

"A lot of people want to write Bob Dylan off. I'm not one of them. Doesn't matter if Bob takes a 10-year rest. Doesn't matter. First of all, if Bob never sang again he's got a catalogue of work that will ensure his reputation into the next millenium. But I don't think that's the case anyway. I think he is Picasso. I think he's resting. And the guy has a perfect right to rest, to coast, and one of these days you're going to hear from his again. He puts a record out every year and I buy 'em all. Well, I try to get them free from my record company. I listen to them all. I can't honestly say I truly enjoyed his last two albums but I give the guy the total benefit of the doubt. I say he's working on something and these are just notes. Just sketches. Something's going to come up and you'll hear him talking about himself or the world again and it's gonna turn you around. I just know it's gonna be that way.

The last time we met for any great length of time was after a concert he'd done in Paris. We met in a café in the 14th Arrondissment and we had a real good writers' shop talk. We really went into the stuff very technically. You couldn't meet two people who work more differently. He said, **'I like this song you wrote called *Hallelujah*.'** In fact, he started doing it in concert. He said, **'How long did that take you to write?'** And I said, 'Oh, the best part of two years'. He said, **'Two years?'** Kinda shocked. And then we started talking about a song of his called *I And I* from *Infidels*. I said, 'How long did you take to write that?'. He said, **'Ohh, 15 minutes'**. I almost fell off my chair. Bob just laughed."

7 July 1984
Martha Quinn interview for MTV,
Wembley Stadium backstage, London, England

Source: *Step Into The Arena*

The present transcription covers merely the broadcast version, not a complete 35min interview.

MQ: Will this tour help you reach a new generation?

BD: I don't reach anybody. They find me. They find me. It's not for me to go out and reach somebody. If they can find me, they find me, and if they don't, they don't. That's the way it's always been. I don't think it's gonna change now just because I'm such an old man and it's nineteen-eighty… what is it?

MQ: …four, Bob! Four.
How do you feel about being a rock n' roll legend, and who else do you consider legendary?

BD: All the early rock n' roll people who aren't around any more, Buddy Holly, Gene Vincent, Woodie Guthrie, is legendary, and a lot of people that you don't have too much information about are really legendary. Somebody like Robert Johnson and a couple more would all be legendary. Jimi Hendrix is legendary.
When people sense that you've come through a certain heat and are still functioning in a semi-coherent type of way, I'm sure they treat you as a legendary figure, but if you go to buy a loaf of bread or you go into a restaurant to order a meal and the check comes and you say, "Hey, wait a minute, I don't need this, I'm a legendary person, right, this is not for me," they don't buy that.

MQ: What kind of audiences came out to see you?

BD: Mostly foreign audiences. In France we had mostly French audiences, and then in Spain we had a lot of Spanish audiences. In Germany they were German audiences…

MQ: How about Italy?

BD: Italy! They were mostly, probably Italian!

MQ: Is there any difference between your protest songs and personal songs?

BD: I think all my songs deal with social and political issues. That's why they call me a protest singer. They all deal with that.

MQ: What do you think of your new audience, those people who weren't born when you brought our 'Blonde on Blonde'?

BD: Well, you can't look at old and new fans, you won't see everyone as an equal.

MQ: Do you always take the same pleasure by playing these old songs?

BD: Yeah!

MQ: Do they still mean a lot for you?

BD: They always mean a lot, you know.

MQ: When I ask musicians which of their records they prefer they usually say "the latest" – what would you say?

BD: Well, I like the latest one, but I thought, uh! The one before that was my personal favorite, then some of the other records I like a lot…

MQ: Like?

BD: That Freewheelin' album. 'Bringing It All Back Home,' I like that I haven't heard them in a long time though. Well, I mean my personal favorite was the "Shot of Love" record but it didn't seem to sell too much. I think it politically, I think it, I don't know… I'm probably the only person that feels that way you know… one of the few.

When you're talking to me about my records and what I do, I personally have, you know, preferences that other people don't have I know what people wanna hear, you know, I know what they think they wanna hear, so I decide I don't care how people think I'm gonna make this record, you know. I'm gonna make this record, that's what I think, and everybody says, well, okay, let 'em think that. I ain't gonna buy that record, 'cause I don't think that, you know, 'Shot of Love' to me, I think, was a great record.

MQ: Now at first Bob didn't really want to go to Europe (South America was his first choice).

BD: Bill Graham is about the only promoter I know that can get people down in South America and he tried to do it, in, er…, at the last moment and, er, I was sort of set my mind mentally to do something, so, er…, we did this 'cause the other one didn't come off.

8 July 1984
Bono Vox Interview, Dublin, Eire

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 723-730.

This interview was conducted at Slane Castle, Dublin immediately prior to Dylan's concert. Bono (BV) is conducting the interview and Van Morrison (VM) contributes here and there. Both Bono and Van Morrison were to be guests at the concert, Van Morrison performing *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue* and Bono joining Dylan on stage for *Blowin' In The Wind*. The interview appeared in the Irish music paper *Hot Press*. (issue of 26 August 1984).

BV: You have been to Ireland before, haven't you?
BD: Yeah, I was in Belfast and in Dublin, and we traveled around a little bit too.
BV: Have you ever spent any time here? Have you ever been here on holiday?
BD: Yeah, well, when I was here, we traveled by car, so we stayed in different places – but Irish music has always been a great part of my life because I used to hang out with the Clancy Brothers. They influenced me tremendously.
BV: Yeah, they have so much balls as a sound, you know, when they sing, it's like punk rock.
BD: Yeah, they were playing clubs as big as this room right here and the place – you couldn't put a pin in it, it would be so packed with people.
BV: You could smell their breath?
BD: Yeah!
BV: I bet you could. They blow you over with their lungs! God, I'd love to sing like that.
BD: Yeah, I spent years with them running around, 61, 62, 63.
BV: Greenwich Village?
BD: All over the place, I played on the same bill with them once.
BV: Get their autographs? (laughs)
BD: No, I didn't get their autograph. But you know one of the things I recall from that time is how great they all were – I mean there is no question, but that they were great. But Liam Clancy was always my favorite singer, as a ballad singer. I just never heard anyone as good, and that includes Barbara Streisand and Pearl Bailey.
BV: You got to be careful here!
BD: He's just a phenomenal ballad singer.
BV: Yeah, you know what I envy of you is that my music, and the music of U2 is like, it's in space somewhere. There is no particular musical roots or heritage that we plug into. In Ireland there is a tradition, but I've never plugged into it. It's like as if we're caught in space. There's a few groups now who are caught in space...
BD: Well, you have to reach back.
BV: We never did play a 12 bar.
BD: You have to reach! There's another group I used to listen to called the McPeake Family. I don't know if you ever heard of them?
BV: The McPeake Family! I'd love to have heard of them, with a name like that.
BD: They are great. Paddy Clancy recorded them. He had a label called Tradition Records, and he used to bring back these records; they recorded for Prestige at the time, and Tradition Records, his company. They were called The McPeake family. They were even more rural than the Clancy Brothers. The Clancy Brothers had always that touch of commerciality to them – you didn't mind it, but it was still there, whereas the McPeake Family sang with harps. The old man, he played the harp – and it was that (gestures) big – and the drums.
BV: Were they a real family?

BD: Yeah, they were a real family; if you go to a record store and ask for a McPeake Family record, I don't know, I'm sure you could still get them in a lot of places.

BV: Have you heard of an Irish group that are working now in this middle ground between traditional and contemporary music called Clannad? Clannad is Gaelic for family, and they've made some very powerful pieces of music, including a song called "Theme From Harry's Game". It's from a film, and it knocked over everyone in Europe. It didn't get played in the US. It's just vocal and they used some low-based frequencies in it as well – it's just beautiful. They're a family, they come from Donegal, and have worked from that same base of traditional music.

BD: There's a group you have here, what's it called, Plankston?

BV: Planxty.

BD: They're great!

BV: Another rock n' roll band!

BD: Yeah, but when I think of what's happening – I think they're great.

BV: There's another group called De Dannan. The name De Dannan has something to do with the lost tribes of Dan. You heard of the disappearing tribe of Dan? They say they came from Ireland.

BD: Yeah, I've heard that, I've heard that.

BV: I'm not a musicologist or expert in this area, but it would appear that this is true. Also, you know they say the Irish musical scale has no roots in Europe whatsoever, rather it comes from Africa and India. The Cartesian people, the Egyptian people, what gave them supremacy in the Middle East was the sail they developed. I forget what they call it, I forget the name of the sail, but this sail allowed them to become successful sea farers and traders and they dominated as a result of their trading, and that same sail which was used on those boats, is used on the West of Ireland.

BD: Is that right?

BV: Bob Quinn made a film called *Atlanteans* in which this theory was elaborated. He suggests that the *Book of Kells*, which is a manuscript, part of it has it's roots in Coptic script, not in Europe. It's not a European thing at all – it's linked from Africa, Spain, Brittany and Ireland, because that was a sea route. I'm not an expert. I shouldn't be talking about it really. But it's of interest when you think of it.

BD: Sure it is.

BV: I might be able to send you over some tapes of that actually.

BD: I'd like to have them. You know Planxty? I also like Paul Brady a lot.

BV: Yeah, he's great. He's a real song writer. Tell me – have you ever approached a microphone, not with words, but just to sing? I had to do this as a necessity once when some lyrics of mine were stolen – and I learnt to sing on the microphone just singing and working the words into it later. I find when I put a pen in my hand it gets in the way! Do you have words first?

BD: I do at certain times.

BV: In Portland, Oregon a number of years ago two pretty girls walked in the dressing room, smiled and walked out with some of our songs, in a brief case.

BD: I used to have that happen to me all the time, except they used to take clothes!

BV: Is that right?

BD: They used to take all my best clothes, but never took my songs.

BV: After that we had to go in to record our second LP, *October*, without any songs – there was a lot of pressure, having to sing under that stress without any words, I found out a lot of things about myself that I didn't even know were there. I'd wondered, had some of the things that have come out of you ever been a surprise to you?

BD: That usually happens at concerts or shows I'm doing, more than recording studios, Also, I never sit around, I usually play... I'll play my guitar, rather than just have something to say, to express myself. I can express it better with my guitar.

BV: I wondered had the songs that you were writing ever frightened you in some way?

BD: Oh yeah, I've written some songs that did that. The songs that I wrote for the *Slow Train* album did that. I wrote those songs. I didn't plan to write them, but I wrote them anyway. I didn't like writing them, I didn't want to write them. I didn't figure... I just didn't want to write them songs at that period of time. But I found myself writing these songs and after I had a certain amount of them, I thought I didn't want to sing them, so I had a girl sing them for me at the time, and what I wanted to do was... she's a great singer...

BV: Who is this?

BD: A girl I was singing with at the time, Carolyn Dennis her name was. I gave them all to her and had her record them, and not even put my name on them. But I wanted the songs out; I wanted them out, but I didn't want to do it because I knew that it wouldn't be perceived in that way. It would just mean more pressure. I just did not want that at that time.

BV: But are you a trouble maker? Is there something in you that wants trouble that an album like *Slow Train* stirs up? Do you wanna fight? Do you wanna box!?

BD: I don't know! I mean, I wanna piss people off once in a while, but boxing or fighting – it would be an exercise to do it. You know, I love to do it, but not with anything at stake.

BV: Chess, do you play chess?

BD: Yeah, I play chess. Are you a chess player?

BV: I am a chess player.

BD: I'm not that good actually.

BV: I'll challenge you to a game of chess.

BD: I don't have it right now actually, I just don't have one on me, but the next time you see me!

BV: Oh, you can get these little ones you know, that you can carry around.

BD: Yeah, I take them on tour all the time, but nobody in the band will play me.

BV: Really?

BD: Yeah, they say it's an ego trip. They say I want to win, I don't want to win, I just like to play.

BV: When you put out a record that causes trouble – is it part of an overall plan, or do you just do it?

BD: No, I don't ever put out a record to cause trouble – if it causes trouble, it causes trouble, that's apart from me. If it causes trouble, that's other people's problem. It's not my problem. I'm just not going to put out a record that I just feel – you know, if I feel like I'm inspired to make a statement, I'll make that statement. But what happens after I do it, I don't care about that.

BV: What's your opening game?

BD: My opening game, you mean king's pawn up two – and all that? I don't know.

BV: You just takes it as it comes.

BD: Yeah. I don't really play that seriously.

BV: Well, I thought I did until I played Adam's brother Sebastian – he was only about 13 years old and he beat me!

BD: Somebody may have a chess game here.

BV: I'd love to play.

They search for a chess board; Van Morrison enters.

BV: You haven't used any synthesizers on your records so far?

BD: No, I've never used those machines.

BV: The Fairlight Music Computer – have you heard of that?

BD: Fairlight?

BV: Van, what do you think of electronic music?

VM: I like the music Brian Eno plays.

BV: He speaks very highly of you. He's producing our record right now.
VM: Say hello.
BV: (to Bob) Do you know Brian Eno?
BD: Brian Eno? I don't know Brian Eno, but I know some of his work.
BV: When you're working with a producer, do you give him the lee-way to challenge you?
BD: Yeah, if he feels like it. But usually we just go into the studio and sing a song, and play the music, and have, you know...
BV: Have you had somebody in the last five years who said "That's crap, Bob"?
BD: Oh, they say that all the time!
BV: Mark Knopfler, did he say that?
BD: I don't know, they spend time getting their various songs right, but with me, I just take a song into the studio and try to rehearse it, and then record it, and then do it. It's a little harder now though to make a good record – even if you've got a good song and a good band. Even if you go in and record it live, it's not gonna sound like it used to sound, because the studios now are so modern, and overly developed, that you can take anything good and you can press it and squeeze it and squash it, and constipate it and suffocate it. You do a great performance in the studio and you listen back to it because the speakers are all so good, but, ah, no!
BV: All technology does is – you go into a dead room with dead instruments and you use technology to give it life that it doesn't have, and then it comes out of the speakers and you believe it. What I've been trying to do is find a room that has life in itself.
BD: Yeah.
BV: A 'living' room.
BD: The machines though, can even take the life out of that room, I've found. You can record in St Peter's Cathedral, you know, and they still make it sound like, eh,...
BV: Somebody's backyard.
BD: Yeah.
BV: That's a good idea. I'd love to record in a cathedral.
BD: You know the studios in the old days were all much better, and the equipment so much better, there's no question about it in my mind. You just walked into a studio, they were just big rooms, you just sang, you know, you just made records; and they sounded like the way they sounded there. That stopped happening in the late Sixties, for me anyway. I noticed the big change. You go into a studio now and they got rugs on the floor, settees and pinball machines and videos and sandwiches coming every ten minutes. It's a big expensive party and you're lucky if you come out with anything that sounds decent.
BV: Yeah, records haven't got better, have they?
BD: No, you go in now, you got your producer, you got your engineer, you got your assistant engineer, usually your assistant producer, you got a guy carrying the tapes around. I mean, you know, there's a million people go into recording just an acoustic song on your guitar. The boys turn the machines on and it's a great undertaking.
BV: There's a system called Effanel which Mick Fleetwood from Fleetwood Mac brought to Africa. It was built for him because he wanted to get some real African drummin', for Tusk. We've used that system. It comes in a light suitcase, very small, no bullshit studio, and it just arrives, you can literally bring it to your living room.
VM: I think all the same they'll go back to 2-track eventually.
BV: There's a guy called Conny Plank, who lives in Germany. He's a producer I think. He produced Makem and Clancy and some Irish traditional bands, also orchestral and funnily enough a lot of the new electronic groups, DAF, Ultravox, and so on. He used to record orchestras by just finding a position in the room where they were already balanced and he applies this in his thinking, in recording modern music: he finds a place in the room where it's already mixed.

VM: I don't know, when I started we didn't think about that! You didn't even think about recording... (laughs)
BV: You didn't even think!
VM: You didn't even know what was on the cards. One day you were in the room, they turned the tape on. After about eight hours or so, they'd say, 'OK, tea break, it's over'.
BD: Yeah, next song, next song!
VM: And that was that – it was an album.
BD: Yeah, you'd make an album in three days or four days and it was over – if that many! It's that long now... it takes four days to get a drum sound.
BV: Do you know the Monty Python team, they're comedians, British comedians, Monty Python and the Holy Grail. They have a sketch that reminds me of you guys – sitting back talking of days gone by: "You tell that to the young people of today and they'd never believe you". But you can't go backwards, you must go forward. You try to bring the values that were back there, you know, the strength, and if you see something that was lost, you got to find a new way to capture that same strength. Have you any idea of how to do that? I think you've done it by the way... I think *Shot Of Love*, that opening track has that.
BD: I think so too. You're one of the few people to say that to me about that record, to mention that record to me.
BV: That has that feeling.
BD: It's a great record, it suits just about everybody.
BV: The sound from that record makes me feel like I'm in the same room as the other musicians. I don't feel like they're over there. Some of our records, I feel like they're over there because we got into this cinema type sound, not bland like FM sound, but we got into this very broad sound. Now we're trying to focus more of a punch, and that's what we are after, this intimacy... I've never interviewed anybody before, by the way. I hate being interviewed myself.
VM: You're doing a good job!
BV: Is this OK? Good! What records do you listen to?
BD: What records do I listen to? New records? I don't know, just the old records really. Robert Johnson. I still listen to those records that I listened to when I was growing up – they really changed my life. They still change my life. They still hold up, you know. The Louvain Brothers, Hank Williams, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Charlie Patton, I always liked to listen to him.
BV: I just bought Woody Guthrie's *Bound For Glory*. I'm just a beginner when it comes to America. I mean, it's changed me. When you go the US, coming from this country, it's more than a different continent...
VM: It's shell shock.
BV: Yeah, coming from troubled Ireland, it's the real shell shock! I'm just getting acquainted with American music and literature. Do you still see Allen Ginsberg?
BD: I run across Allen from time to time, yeah, Gregory Corsos's back now, he's doing some readings, I think he's just published a new book.
BV: I've just been reading this book *Howl*.
BD: Oh, that's very powerful. That's another book that changed me. *Howl*, *On the Road*, *Dharma Bums*.
VM: (to Bono) Have you read *On the Road*?
BV: Yes I have, I'm just starting that. You have a reference in one of your songs to John Donne, '*Rave On John Donne*'. Have you read his poetry?
VM: I was reading it at the time.
BD: (to Bono) **You heard the songs – Brendan Behan's songs?**
BV: Yeah.
BD: *Royal Canal*, you know the *Royal Canal*?
VM: His brother wrote it. His name is Dominic.

BD: Oh, Dominic wrote *Royal Canal*?
BV: You know Brendan's son hangs out around here in Dublin. He's a good guy, I believe.
BD: I know the solo lyrics to the *Royal Canal*. I used to sing it all the time.
BV: How does it go?
BD: 'The hungry feeling came over me stealing, as the mice were squalling in my prison cell' (sings)**.**
BV: That's right, yeah!
BD: (continues) **'That old triangle went jingle jangle, all along the banks of the Royal Canal'.**
BV: That's right, when did you read that?
BD: (and still more) **'In the female prison there's seventy women. It's all over there that I want to dwell. And that old triangle goes jingle jangle, all along the banks of the Royal Canal'.**
BV: Have you been to the Royal Canal?
BD: No, I used to sing that song though. Every night.
BV: Our music – as I was saying earlier – it doesn't have those roots.
VM: Yeah, there was a break in the lineage. I sussed that out when I went to see Thin Lizzy years ago, the first night in LA. and I was watching at the back of the stage and I realized that the music was a complete cut in the connection between the end of the Sixties and the middle of the Seventies – a severing of the traditional lineage of groups.
BV: I like to know more about roots music. I'm hungry for a past.
VM: You know you should listen to some of that stuff.
BV: I will. I've been listening to some gospel music, you know, like the Swan Silvertones, and stuff like that.
BD: That's US stuff though.
VM: US stuff, but the British stuff you should listen to, you know, like some of the old stuff, like the Yardbirds.
BV: Yeah, I've got some of their tapes recently, some real good tapes.
BD: You can still hear the McPeakes. The next generation may not be able to though. Who knows? I would hate to think that. Listen we're gonna have to get ready to play. Are you gonna stay for the show?
BV: Certainly, that's what I'm here for actually.
BD: To record it, Ha!

8 July 1984 (published 17 May 2001)
Bono Quoting Dylan Re: Irish Music

Source: *USA Today*, 17 May 2001

Times change, but Dylan leaves a lasting imprint
By Edna Gundersen, USA TODAY

Jeff Zelevansky, AP
The mystique of Bob Dylan persists today, as generations of musicians continue to pay homage.

Bob Dylan has never had a No. 1 single in a span of 453 songs recorded on 42 albums. His album sales average 1.53 million a year, respectable but certainly modest by 'N Sync standards. Yet, as Dylan turns 60 on May 24, he is considered, by Time and a wide variety of pundits and historians, the most influential musical artist in the latter half of the 20th century. His songs recycle in uncountable covers, from remakes of the career-triggering *Blowin' in the Wind* to versions, by four different artists, of *To Make You Feel My Love* from 1997's Grammy-winning *Time Out of Mind*. *Things Have Changed*, from the film *Wonder Boys*, won an Oscar and Golden Globe this year for best movie song.

Lines that branded Dylan a poet and counterculture valedictorian in the '60s are imprinted on the culture: "*When you got nothing, you got nothing to lose*"; "*a hard rain's a-gonna fall.*"; "*to live outside the law you must be honest.*" Some lyrics — "*you don't need a weather man to know which way the wind blows*" and "*the times they are a-changin'*" — appear in Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*.

The Bob Dylan file

Born: Robert Allen Zimmerman May 24, 1941, in Duluth, Minn., to Abram and Beatrice.

Musical influences: Woody Guthrie, Hank Williams, Little Richard, Odetta, Buddy Holly, Johnny Cash, Jimmie Rodgers, Leadbelly.

Personal: Married to Sara Lowndes, 1965-77. Adopted her daughter, Maria. They had four children — Jesse, Anna, Samuel and Jakob (of The Wallflowers). According to new book *Down the Highway*, Dylan secretly married backup singer Carolyn Dennis in 1986; they had daughter Desiree Gabrielle, now 15, and divorced in 1992.

Catalog: Released 42 albums, not including two Traveling Wilburys collaborations. Recorded and released 453 songs, mostly originals. Has sold 60 million albums worldwide, including 9.9 million in U.S. in the past decade. Had 15 top 10 albums, including his latest, 1997's *Time Out of Mind*. Top 10 singles include *Like a Rolling Stone*, *Positively 4th Street*, *Rainy Day Women #12 & 35* and *Lay Lady Lay*.

Controversy: Banned from singing *Talkin' John Birch Society Blues* on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1963. Inflamed folk purists by going electric at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, then was routinely booed during his fabled 1966 tour. *Rainy Day Women #12 & 35* banned in USA for purported drug references ("*Everybody must get stoned*"). Caused a stir when he revealed his conversion from Judaism to Christianity in three albums. Introduced the Beatles to marijuana.

Health scares: Holed up for months after a motorcycle accident July 29, 1966, near Woodstock. Fell seriously ill in May 1997 with pericarditis, a swelling of the sac around the heart, brought on by a fungal infection.

Honors: Oscar and Golden Globe for best song from a film, for *Things Have Changed*, 2001. Seven Grammys, including album of the year for 1997's *Time Out of Mind*. Kennedy Center Honors recipient, 1997. Lifetime achievement Grammy, 1991. Inducted into Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, 1988.

He has survived radically shifting trends, despite a career-long habit of being out of step with the times. At 20, he sang with the confidence and conviction of a septuagenarian bluesman. He was so much older then. At 60, he's still hitting the road with the restlessness of a teen. In pop culture years, he's ageless.

Dylan's continuing impact is most keenly felt in music's creative community. He's regarded as pop's unrivaled liberator for breaking the three-minute song barrier, ignoring moon-June-spoon lyric formulas and charting a chameleon course — from folkie to rocker to country crooner to holy roller — that paved the way for David Bowie, Elvis Costello and Madonna.

He has demonstrated that the nasal intonations of an unconventional voice, often dismissed as a croak or worse, could outshine (or certainly outlast) the most pristine pop songbirds.

Across three generations of musicians, he is exalted, not just as his generation's spokesman, a folk rebel or a pop experimenter, but as a teacher. It's another side of Bob Dylan — the knotty professor, whose dog-eared back pages contain the blueprints for numberless musical progeny.

"Everybody owes a debt" to Dylan, says Bruce Springsteen. "He really did change the face of popular music, particularly in how a singer could sound and what topics you could take on. Everything from hip-hop lyrics to Marvin Gaye to *Anarchy in the U.K.* can be traced in some fashion back to his breakthroughs."

Tom Petty, Dylan's frequent collaborator and a bandmate in retro-rock's all-star Traveling Wilburys, says, "He's very spontaneous and gives musicians a lot of room. Whatever he does, there's always a good, durable song involved that can take many arrangements and interpretations."

Sundry '60s peers enjoyed parallel ascents but still took cues from the maverick wordsmith.

"I got good grades on all my papers, but it took Dylan to get me to write," says Stephen Stills. "All of a sudden, I was thinking in complete sentences and using my whole vocabulary. Hey, nad've rhymes with grieve! He woke me up."

Billy Joel says he was motivated to join Columbia Records because the label had signed an outlaw folkie with a creaky voice. "Before Bob, they had Broadway showtunes, Mantovani-type records and *Sing Along With Mitch*. They had the foresight to sign this guy who didn't sound like anybody and seemed to be from another era."

Inspired by Dylan's graceful melodies, Joel eventually abandoned hopes of penning Dylanesque prose and detoured into classical music. "Bob's a consummate wordsmith," Joel says. "Nobody wrote like him. I really stunk at it, because I'm too bloody literal. That's why I don't like words anymore."

Though Dylan mined Americana, his sway extended beyond U.S. borders. Paul McCartney, who soaked up Dylan's 1962 debut at his parents' home in Liverpool, says The Beatles took cues from his subsequent electric forays. "He helped us free up artistically," he says. "He had an influence on everyone. Dylan and Chuck Berry belong on the list of America's great poets."

British glam-rock pioneer David Bowie, who toasted the bard on 1972's *Song for Bob Dylan*, notes, "Dylan taught my generation that it was OK to write pop songs about your worst nightmares."

U2 singer Bono taught himself guitar while listening to Dylan.

"His voice has been a bee buzzing around my ear since I can remember being conscious," he says. "It's an unusual voice, not always soothing, sometimes nagging, but it reminds us of the possibilities for music and its place in the world."

Shaped by punk rock, the quartet had disregarded its Irish roots until Dylan sent them excavating. During their first encounter, Dylan probed Bono about Ireland's folk balladeers, then recited Brendan Behan's *Banks of the Royal Canal*.

"U2 kind of came from outer space, where punk was ground zero and you didn't admit to having roots. Bob scolded me, **'You're sitting on all this stuff. You should check it out.'** As we fall over ourselves toward the fast and furious future, Dylan feels like the brakes, reminding us of stuff we might have lost, like our dignity."

Just liked by women

Dylan crossed the gender line, joining Joan Baez and Joni Mitchell as major forces shaping female singer-songwriters. Stevie Nicks says flatly, "He's a total mentor." "What I love about Bob is the fact that no one's ever been able to really figure him out," says Bonnie Raitt. "With every reinvention, you never know if it's a genuine shift or just him slyly ducking out of view. No one has had a more profound cultural and political impact on our generation."

Until she played his tunes, Sheryl Crow envisioned a future as a side musician, not a songwriter. "Playing Dylan's songs empowers you," she says. "It bolsters you to say what your spirit needs to say. Even though Dylan has been completely deified, he's taken all the spiritual journeys we plebeians go through. In his search you can see the patterns of humanity."

At 15, Aimee Mann, roused by *Blood on the Tracks*, took a stab at emulating his writing.

"My attempts were horrifying," she says. "The characters were lost and bedraggled street people I knew nothing about. But he was the only great lyricist around, and I wanted to be him."

"Here's a guy who did bluegrass, folk, country, rhythm and blues," says Shawn Colvin. "No territory was sacred. There's a valuable lesson in that. Bob Dylan took an idiom and made it personal."

Dylan gospel spread to unlikely corners, imprinting rap and punk as well as country, blues and folk. Billy Gibbons of Texas boogie-band ZZ Top says Dylan's passion for American roots music "opened our own musical curiosities. Although ZZ Top may well be thought of as something more akin to Howlin' Wolf, Dylan's remarkably insightful word combinations and rhyme stimulated fresh ways of expressing inner feelings in a sort of secret blues language."

Chuck D of the pioneering rap group Public Enemy cites an early hip-hop street phrase ("I'm chillin' like Bob Dylan") as evidence of Dylan's clout in urban music. "He is stenciled on a lot of aspects of my career — his ability to paint pictures with words, his concerns for society," he says. "He taught me to go against the grain."

Positively forthright

Ditto for Jim Lindberg of Pennywise, a hot punk outfit that owes some of its fire to Dylan's spark.

"I liked his stripped-down approach from the start," he says. "It doesn't rely on stage theatrics or a disposable message. Dylan's music is meant to appeal to your heart and brain, not your crotch."

Pop neophytes willing to learn will find priceless instruction in Dylan's songs, Lindberg says.

"People lack the courage to express themselves honestly now," he says. "Standing by your convictions is one thing we've lost since Dylan's generation."

Billy Joe Armstrong of pop-punk trio Green Day picked up pointers from Dylan's stylish vitriol. "His lyrics could tear someone apart in four minutes. I wouldn't want to be at the other end of a song like that."

Ryan Adams of alternative country act Whiskeytown fell under Dylan's spell after finding lyrics his mother had jotted during college. Countering detractors who say Dylan is no master of warblers, he says, "There is a seductive quality to Dylan's voice, and it changes as scenarios call for different registers, almost the way theater works. Nobody has that voice. Even on our homogenized McDonald's planet, where cheerleaders are icons, anyone can do a Dylan impersonation."

Young stars, whether weaned on grunge or rap or hair bands, eventually gravitate to the godfather of troubadours. Black Crowes singer Chris Robinson says, "From very early on, the music Bob made sounded important to me." Rising singer/songwriter Pete Yorn says he and his teen peers shared a knee-jerk respect for Dylan that deepened with exposure to his records and shows.

Yorn's Cliff Notes on Dylan: "His pacing is subtle. There's no fat in his songs. Whether it's his own experience or a story he's telling, he puts it across in a way that moves people."

When Canadian singer/songwriter Ron Sexsmith first heard *Blowin' in the Wind*, he envisioned a folkie Jethro Clampett. He quickly changed his tune. "Dylan improvises like a jazz artist," he says. "He wasn't after perfection. He'd record a song and it would never be the same again. I've tried to carry on that tradition."

Dylan's '60s contemporaries are quick to credit him with revolutionizing all forms of music. He beguiled a young Judy Collins with his Woody Guthrie persona at Gerde's Folk City in 1962. She's covered dozens of his tunes and stole a compositional technique: "He has a trick of taking an ancient song and setting a new melody to it. He makes you feel as though you already know the song. And he'll use a very simple melody to carry the weight of complicated lyrics."

Paul Simon, also hatched in the folk scene, praises Dylan's gifts but chose to steer clear of his trail.

"My reaction was, 'Don't do what he does. He's got it covered.' You've got to go your own way or you're just in a shadow."

That shadow is too immense to sidestep, says John Mellencamp, a zealous disciple who was in grade school when his older brother played him a Dylan record.

"Bob put down a huge footprint," he says. "He has brought more beauty into this world than the rest of us combined. He showed us how beautiful sorrow could be and how ridiculous the world looked to him."

The self-described crank generously insists Dylan has yet to make a bad record. "He's never let me down. I love Woody Guthrie and Hank Williams, but I got news for those guys: This young kid beat you."

8 July 1984
David Hammond & Derek Bailey interview, Slane Castle area, near Dublin, Ireland

Source: *The Telegraph 18,* Winter 1984, pp. 58-62

DH: We're doing a picture about the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem and just wanted to have a little chat with yourself. Why'd you think they became so enormously popular and successful in America in the 1960s?

BD: Ah, mainly because of the, you know, the dynamics they sang with, and the subject matter they sang about and... they just reached a lot of people, you know, with their exuberance and their attitude – mostly it was attitude.

Other than that, I mean, they're all great singers. They were all so different, too, weren't they? The times I remember the Clancy Brothers most was not mostly in the clubs where we played, but in those bars. There was a bar called the... the White Horse bar, and they were in there... you could always go there any time, and they'd be singing, you know, Irish... the Irish folk songs, I... actually I learnt quite a few there myself. But Liam was... for me, I never heard a singer as good as Liam ever. He was just the best ballad singer I'd ever heard in my life – still is, probably. I don't think I can think of anybody who is a better ballad singer than Liam. Tommy [Makem] **was alright, too, but Tommy would sing one of those rousing songs or... you know mostly... but Liam always sang those ballads which always would get to me.**

DH: At that time in the Village, when you were knocking about in the 1960s... were they...?

BD: Plus we had the same girlfriend!

DH: Do you think that... were they influential on your own career?

BD: Oh yeah, enormously so. And my... yeah, because I was... you were around them all the time and they just sang so many songs all the time, you couldn't help but... The first album I made, there was one song on it that was an old song from... I'd heard on an old banjo record someplace, but I did that song the way the Clancy Brothers, I thought, would have done it, you know, if... you know, in their style on the very first record I made. It's something which... just that rousing sort of rendition of...

DH: You were a young man from a very large continent; they came from a very small island. What was important to you in the songs themselves and the subject matter of the songs?

BD: Well, I'd never heard those kind of songs before, although I... close up, you know. I'd heard them on record but I hadn't heard them close up. All the legendary people they used to sing about – *Brennan on the Moor*, or *Roddy McCorley*, or these people they... I wasn't aware of them, when they existed... but it was as if they'd just existed yesterday.

DH: They became heroes in your life, is it?

BD: Oh, yeah, I would think of *Brennan on the Moor* the same way as I would think of Jesse James or something, you know, they just became very real to me.

DH: You appear to have been fond of them personally, you know, and are you still fond of the material that they sing?

BD: Oh yeah. I saw them a few years ago – about four years ago. I saw Liam and Tommy play – they had a different band then. I don't think Tom... Tom Clancy or Paddy was there. I think another brother was... but it was a different band. And then I ran into Liam in an airport somewhere last year, I can't remember where. I run across them from here time and time again, you know.

DH: When you come to Ireland on a time, an occasion like this, do you hear echoes of their music in your imagination?

BD: Yeah, yeah, I can see where they, where they get it all from, you know. Then, you know, there are a lot of melodies which I heard them sing close up that I took and I made some

myself, you know, I wrote some of my own songs to some of the melodies that I heard them do. That happened too.

DH: Would you put it as strong as saying that every time Bob Dylan sings there's a trace of the Clancy Brother?

BD: That wouldn't be an overstatement, you know. There's some truth to that, yeah. Oh yeah, it was great... I mean, all night long we'd just sing... oh, there'd be some poets there, too, and just get up with a bottle of beer or ale or something, and just recite a poem, and even that was music. You know, that was musical too.

DH: There were stories going about as well, they were telling stories at the same time now. Did you find the stories thrilling?

BD: Yeah, I found it all thrilling. I did. It was just, you know, I'd never heard anything like it... yeah, it was completely thrilling. It was over... it was just something which happened in that period of time and I never really felt that again. I mean, I don't know, maybe they still do that in some place in America, but I don't know where.

DH: Do you regard it as a little, kind of, little paradise in your life... that period in your life? It seemed to be to them... when they look back in the Village at that time in the sixties, there seemed to be a kind of encapsulated....

BD: Well, yeah. Looking back on it now it feels that way. But when it was happening, it was all happening so fast that you didn't really think about it, you know. It just seemed to be... just where you were... you found yourself in that situation, that position... and that's just the way it was. But it went by so fast that nobody really thought about it. I don't recall thinking... thinking, you know, making any thoughts in my head about it. I suppose I thought it would have gone on forever, you know, I don't know. Everybody just seemed to disappear. I've gone back to that bar and it's not the same. You know they're out there and....

30 July 1984
Dylan On Dylan,
The Bert Kleinman Interview, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 485-498.

Dylan gives a major interview for *Westwood One* to form part of a three hour radio special called *Dylan On Dylan* which was broadcast throughout America. The conversation is interspersed with his songs. It is conducted at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in New York by Bert Kleinman (BK) and Artie Mogul (AM) (who signed Dylan up with Witmark in 1962) sometime during the Summer of 1984, shortly after Dylan's return from the European tour, but was not broadcast on FM until later in the year, commencing on November 13 and then at different times at different locations through the U.S.

Released on *Dylan on Dylan*, *Westwood One* (Radio Station Discs), November 17 1984.

Dylan's answers, minus questions, but interspersed with commentary and some music, were featured in the U. K. on the Roger Scott (Capital Radio) Show on November 25 1984.

BK: Is it true that you taught yourself guitar and harmonica?

BD: Ah! Well, nobody really teaches themselves guitar and harmonica, you know, when you don't know anything first, like, you get a book or something and you learn. What I remember is I learnt a couple of chords out of some books and then just going out to watch people, you know, to see how they're doing it, how they're playing those chords and... wherever people are playing you just... you don't really go so much to hear 'em, you just go to see how they're doing what they do, you know, try to get up as close as you can and just see what their fingers are doing. You know, in that early stage it's more like a learning thing, you know, and that sometimes can take... you know, years, you know, like many years: sometimes it takes people many years, sometimes it takes... But to me I kind of picked it up rather quickly, but I didn't really play with that much technique. And people didn't really take to me because of that, because I didn't really go out of my way to learn as much technique as some other people... I mean I know people that made a complete profession and livelihood out of playing John Lee Hooker chords, just hammering on, you know, on the E string, and that was all, and they could play it in such a beautiful way it looked like a ballet dancer. You know, and everybody had a different style, you know, they had styles and they had techniques, especially in folk music. You know, there was your Southern Mountain banjo, then flat picking, there's your finger-picking techniques, and just all of these different runs, you know, different styles of ballads...

House Of The Rising Sun plays

BD: Folk music was a world... it was very split up. There was a purist side to it. You know, many people didn't want to hear it if you couldn't play a song exactly the way that... Aunt Molly Jackson played it, you know, they didn't wanna hear it But I just kinda blazed my way through all that stuff (laughs). I would hear somebody do something and it finally get to pass a certain point that you'd say, well, what do you want from that. I mean, you can learn... you might wanna learn, the song or the lyrics, or you might want to see how they're playing it, you might wanna pick that up, that style they're playing. I don't know, I just stayed up day and night just barnstorming my way through all that

stuff. And then I heard Woody Guthrie one time... before I got to New York I heard Woody Guthrie and then it all came together for me.

Woody Guthrie plays.

BK: Do you remember the first Woody Guthrie record you heard?

BD: Yeah, I think so. The first Woody Guthrie song I heard, I think, was probably called *Pastures Of Plenty*. *Pastures Of Plenty* and *Pretty Boy Floyd* and another song that he... he used to write a lot of his songs from existing melodies, you know, a couple of the ones maybe... *Grand Coulee Dam*. They just really impressed me.

BK: Got to you?

BD: Oh yeah. Because they were original. I mean, they just had a mark of originality on them, well the lyrics did. I just learned all those songs. I just heard them and I learned them, all of the records, you know, I learned them all, all the songs of Woody Guthrie that I could find. Anybody that had a Woody Guthrie record or that knew a Woody Guthrie song. And in St. Paul at the time, where I was, there were some people around who not only had his records but that knew his songs. So I just learned them all. Some of the best records that I heard him make were these records that he made on the Stinsom label, with Cisco Houston and Sonny Terry. I don't know if Leadbelly was on there or not. I learned Leadbelly too. I learned a bunch of his stuff and learned how to play like that. But one of the biggest thrills I ever had actually was when I reached New York... whenever it was... I got to play with Cisco Houston. No... I didn't really... I don't know if I actually... yeah I did get to play with him at a party or something. But, I used to watch him; he used to play at Folk City, you know, the night club at Folk City. He was an amazing looking guy; he looked like Clark Gable. He was like a movie star.

AM: He reminded me a little of Tennessee Ernie actually.

BD: Yeah.

AM: Also very unheralded.

BD: Oh, completely. Completely, like one of the great unsung heroes of all times, you know. One of the great American figures, and no one... you know, you can ask people about him and nobody knows anything about him.

Talkin' New York plays

BK: When do you think you started to develop something that was uniquely yours? You were talking about playing Woody Guthrie.

BD: Yeah, well, I was doing Woody stuff... well, New York would do that to you. I was playing all Woody Guthrie stuff. When I came to New York, that's all I played was Woody Guthrie songs. Well, about six months after that, I mean, I'd stopped playing all Woody Guthrie songs. I used to play in a place called Cafe Wha, and it always used to open at noon. It opened at noon and closed at six in the morning and it was just a non-stop flow of people. Usually they were tourists, you know, who were looking for beatniks in the Village. There'd used to be maybe five groups that played there. I used to play with a guy called Fred Neil, who wrote the song *Everybody's Talking* the song that was in the film *Midnight Cowboy*. Fred... I don't know where he was from... I think he was from Florida.

BK: Coconut Grove, I think.

BD: Yeah, but he had a songwriter to deal with in Nashville so he used to make that scene, from Coconut Grove to Nashville to New York. And he had a strong, powerful voice, almost a bass voice. And a powerful sense of rhythm. And he used to play most of the songs that somebody like Josh White would play and I would just play harmonica with him once in a while, and get to sing a song. You know, when he was taking a break or something and so I'd get to sing a song once and play harmonica the rest of the time.

That was his show. He would be on for maybe half an hour and then a conga group would get on, called Los Congeros, with twenty conga drummer players and bongos and steel drums. And they would play for maybe a half hour. And this girl, I think her name was Judy Rainey, she used to play sweet Southern Mountain Appalachian ballads, with electric guitar and a small amplifier. And then another guy used to sing on there named Hal Waters who used to sort of be a crooner. He used to sing sorta like Leon Bibbs, remember him? He used to sing and then there'd be a comedian and he'd go up for maybe fifteen or twenty minutes, then an impersonator. And that'd be the whole show, that'd be like all the... this unit would just go around non-stop so you'd know when you went on after whoever it was. And then you could eat there, you got fed there, which was actually the best thing about the place.

AM: How long a set would you do?

BD: I'd do... oh, you know, about half hour, forty minutes and then go back on – the comedian only did about... I tell you, was hooted off the stage. If they didn't like you back then, I mean, you couldn't play. If they liked you, you played more. If they didn't like you, you didn't play at all. You'd play one or two songs and people would just boo or hiss, or something, you know.

BK: This wasn't your own stuff you were singing then?

BD: No, I didn't start playing my own stuff until... until... much later.

Blowin' In The Wind plays.

BK: Well, where did you start to perform your own stuff?

BD: Well, I just drifted into it, you know. I started singing, writing my own songs some place or somewhere. I always kinda written my own songs but I never really would play them. Nobody played their own songs; the only person that I ever heard do that was Woody Guthrie. And then one day I just wrote a song, and it was the first song I ever wrote that I performed in public was the song that I wrote to Woody Guthrie. And I just felt like playing it one night. And I played it.

Song To Woody plays

BK: Was writing something that you'd always wanted to do or was it basically from the Woody thing?

BD: No, not really. It wasn't a thing that I'd wanted to do ever. I wanted just a song to sing, and there came a certain point where I couldn't sing anything. I had to write what I wanted to sing 'cause what I wanted to sing nobody else was writing. I couldn't find it anywhere. I mean, what I felt like, what I felt was going on, nobody was writing, you know, I couldn't find that song someplace. If I could I probably would have never started writing.

The Times They Are A-Changin' plays

BK: The writing wasn't something that came easy to you? Because, I mean, it is a craft you do very well and you talk about it so casually.

BD: Well, yeah, it is, it does come easy. But then, after you make so many records and the years kinda just go by, it's like sometimes you just don't know anymore whether, am I doing this because I want to do it or because you think it's expected of you. Do you know what I mean? So you'd start just saying, well, I've gotta write a song, it's time to write a song. And you'll try to do something but it just won't come out right. At those kinda times it's best just to go sing somebody else's song.

Master Of War plays

BK: Was it a lot of work writing? Was it a labor at that point, or did it just...

BD: Not really, it was something I used to do. You'd sit up and write... You'd just sit up all night and write a song, or, in those days I used to write songs a lot of the times in cafes. Or at somebody's house with the typewriter. *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*, I wrote in the basement of the Village Gate. All of it, the basement of the Village Gate at Chip Moncks'. You know Chip? He used to have a place down there in the boiler room, an apartment that he slept in...

BK: The Greenwich Hotel.

BD: Er, next to the Greenwich Hotel. But his place was literally in the basement of the Village Gate. He used to do the lights there, I think. And I wrote *A Hard Rain 's A-Gonna Fall* down there. I'd write 'em at peoples houses, you know, or at peoples apartments, wherever I was, you know.

BK: Were you much of a polisher. I mean, did you write it and then pore over it or it pretty much happen...

BD: Pretty much I'd just leave them the way they were...

All I Really Want To Do plays followed by *Gates Of Eden*.

BK: With lyrics like that it's not surprising that a lot of people in what was called the establishment considered Bob Dylan a threat when he started out in the early '60s. But at the same time he was an underground sensation, a young poet hailed as an enigmatic spokesman for the new generation. The media hopped on the bandwagon and Dylan was even hired to sing on the Ed Sullivan Show. The song he was to sing was a talking blues about the John Birch Society but at the last minute CBS said "no way" and Dylan just left.

BD: Yeah, I don't know why I walked out that show. I could have done something else but we'd rehearsed that song, you know, so many times and everybody had heard it. I mean, we'd just rehearsed it, you know, for maybe days, you know, and when they run through the show they just, you know... put you on and you'd run through your number and you're off, and it always got a great response and I was looking forward to singing it, and I was looking forward to singing it because it had got such a great response and Ed Sullivan seemed to really like it (laughs) **as I remember.**

BK: It probably was the sponsor who objected.

BD: I don't know who objected, but it was showtime, you know, and... er, just before I was going out to sing it they came in and there was this big huddle. I could see people talking about something and I was just getting ready to play, you know, and somebody stepped up in and said that I couldn't sing that song. They wanted me to sing a Clancy Brothers' song and it didn't make any sense for me to sing a Clancy Brothers' song on nationwide TV at that time. So... I just left.

Maggie's Farm plays

AM: Do you remember that time we were all down in San Juan, Puerto Rico, at the CBS record convention and – it was being held at the San Juan Hilton or whatever they call it – San Juan Hilton... Carib Hilton, I guess – this huge CBS record convention, and it was just as Bob was beginning to hit, and the President of CBS at the time was a fabulous man named Goddard Lieberson and they wouldn't let Bob in the hotel because he was not wearing, I think, a tie or a jacket.

BD: Yeah, or a shirt.

AM: And Lieberson, to his credit, told the manager either he comes in the hotel or I'm pulling the whole convention out of here. Have I told the story right?

BD: Yeah, he was a big supporter of mine, Goddard Lieberson, as was John Hammond. Without those people like that I don't think nothing would have happened for me. If I

was to come along now, in this day, with all these people that are running the record companies now, they would see somebody like me, they would, you know, bar the door I think. But you had people back then that were more entrenched in individuality, or something.

AM: And also not as insecure in their jobs.

BD: No, no, they ran things, you know, they made decisions and it stuck. Now, I mean, it is like everybody chats with somebody else. It's like well, I'll tell you tomorrow. Call me back later. Yeah, we almost got a deal, stuff like that., you know

Subterranean Homesick Blues plays

BK: Did you get along with Lieberson OK?

BD: Oh yeah, he was great. He even used to come to some sessions of mine. He'd always stop in and say hello, you know.

BK: Did they ever get any pressure though? I mean, there were people considered your music almost subversive. Although I always considered it very American.

BD: I guess they did... I don't know. But they, they... like I said, they seemed to run things. You know, other people may have been talking under their breath or something, you know, behind their back, and things like that. But at this time their big acts were Mitch Miller, you know, and, er, Mitch miller was the biggest. Andy Williams, Johnny Mathis was big... I didn't really begin to sell records anyway until the second record – I think the second record made the charts – went up the charts, the second record I did.

AM: First single to make the charts was *Subterranean Homesick Blues*. Made the bottom of the charts.

BD: That was my fourth record or something.

BK: Ahem, yeah.

AM: But I think the *Freewheelin'* album made the charts, but it was *Subterranean Homesick Blues*.

BK: That was an amazing single though, when you think of what the singles were like at the time.

BD: They made some good records then, that were, you know, were good pop records. Not on Columbia though. Phil Spector was doing a lot of stuff at that time, and Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller I think were doing it; these are big...

BK: Did you listen to a lot of pop stuff at that time?

BD: Yeah, I listened to a lot of pop stuff, but it never really influenced what I was doing to any great degree. It had earlier or the earlier stuff did, like the really earlier stuff, the old Hillbilly stuff or when rock n' roll came in after Elvis, you know, Elvis, Carl Perkins, Buddy Holly, those people.. Chuck Berry, Little Richard, that stuff influenced me and all those people faded away. Yet, nostalgia to me isn't really rock n' roll. Because when I was a youngster the music they were playing... the music I heard was Frankie Lane, Rosemary Clooney, Denis... what's his name? Your Hit Parade. Denis Day? Or Dorothy Collins and, er... the Mills Brothers, all that stuff. You know, when I hear stuff like that it always strikes a different chord than all the rock n' roll stuff does. The rock n' roll stuff I had a conscious mind at that time, but ten years before that it was like Mule Train, you know, and... Johnny Ray knocked me out, Johnny Ray was the first person to actually really knock me out.

BK: What was it? What was it about Johnny Ray, do you think?

BD: Well, he was just so emotional, wasn't he? I ran into him in an elevator in Australia. He was like one of my idols, you know. I mean, I was speechless. There I was in an elevator with Johnny Ray. I mean, what do you say, you know?

Positively Fourth Street plays

BK: When you started to move from the pure folk style into a more electric style, was that a tough one?

BD: Now we're getting into a touchy subject (laughs)**.**

BK: Because today, I mean, you go on stage and both of those things co-exist. I mean, nobody thinks twice.

BD: Yeah, they always did co-exist, you know.

BK: I'm not talking about so much that, but at least what it seemed like from the outside. I mean there were people who were trying to tell you how to make your music.

BD: Oh, there's always people trying to tell you how to do everything in your life, you know. If you listen to that, I mean, you can... if you ask somebody's opinion... if you really don't know what to do and you really don't care that you don't know what to do, just ask somebody's opinion. You know, you'll get a million different opinions. If you don't want to do something, just ask somebody's opinion and they'll just verify it for you, you know. The easiest way to do something is just don't ask anybody's opinion. I mean, if you really believe in what you're doing – I've asked people's opinion and it's been a great mistake, in different areas. I have, I mean, in my personal life, I've asked people what do you think about doing this and they've said... Oh wow! You know, and then you end up usually not really using it or else doing it wrong.

AM: As a matter of fact, I think an artist has to make an innate decision about their...

BD: Yeah, you know what's right When those times come you know what's right, you know. A lot of times you might be farming around and not knowing what's right you might do something dumb, but that's only because you don't know what to do in the first place. But if you know what's right and it strikes you at a certain time you can usually believe that instinct If you act on it then you'll be successful at it I mean, whatever it is.

Like A Rolling Stone plays

BK: Recording is a whole other thing from being on stage, and you, from what I've read, try and record as spontaneously as possible.

BD: I have, yeah, I have. I don't do that so often anymore, but I have. I usually just take a song in the studio, because recording a song bores me, you know. It's like working in a coal mine. Well, I mean, it's not really as serious as that, I mean, you're not completely that far underground! Literally, in a literal sense, but, you know, you can't just... you know... you could be indoors for months and never know it you know. I mean, what you think is real is just not anymore. I mean, you're just listening to sounds all the time and your whole world just is working with tapes and things, and... I've never liked that side of it Plus I've never got into it on that level. When I recorded I just went in and recorded the songs I had, you know; that's the way people recorded then. But the people don't record that way, and I shouldn't record that way either because they can't even get it down that way anymore. To do what I used to do, or to do what anybody used to do you have to stay in the studio a longer time to even get that right Because, you know, technology has messed everything up so much.

BK: It's messed it up?

BD: Yeah, yeah, it's messed it up.

BK: Well, what...

BD: Technology is giving you a false picture... anybody who got anything to do falsely. Like you listen to the records that are done now they're all done in a technology sort of way. Which is a conniving kind of way. You can dream up what you want to do and just go in and dream it up, you know, and do it But you go see some of that stuff live and, you know, you're gonna be very disappointed, because... er... well, I mean if you want to see some of it live. You may not want to, you know. But, I think it's messed it up, but it's progress you know. You can't go back the way it used to be. For me it's messed things up. For a lot of people... a lot of people it's messed things up for, and then for a

lot of other people it's a great advantage for. In other words you can get something right now; it doesn't have to be right but you can get it right, you know. It can be totally wrong but you can get it right And it can be done just with sound and... we were just recording something the other night and we were gonna put some handclaps on it, you know. And the guy sitting behind the board, he was saying – "Well do you guys wanna go out there and actually clap? I mean, I got a machine right here that could do that." And "oh, what's his name," you know... and his name was Roland or something, you know (laughs)**. But it, you know, we went out and clapped instead, you know. Not that it was any big deal, we could have had some machine do it But that's just a small example of what, what... everything is just machine orientated you know.**

Just Like A Woman plays

BK: You talk almost, you say, like – I don't really know how to put it – that, you know, like the world's gone here and like you're old-fashioned.

BD: Well, I feel I am old-fashioned, but I don't feel, you know, like I'm old-fashioned in the way that I'm not modern-fashioned. You know, I feel that... you know, on a certain level there is no old-fashioned and there's no new-fashioned; it's... it's, there really is... nothing has changed, you know. I don't like I'm old-fashioned in the kind of way where I feel that I'm a passe person, you know, that's sitting somewhere, you know, out in Montana, and just watching it snow, you know. But even if I was, you know, I mean I'm sure that would be OK.

AM: Yeah, Bob, but you cant go to a concert like Wembley and get that kind of...

BD: Well, OK, but, I mean, look, you say old-fashioned, but life is like that You don't get that many years to live, right? So if you wanna keep up with things, I mean how long can you keep up with things to see what's new? And even when you're keeping up with things, what are you keeping up with? You try to keep up with what? Who buys lots of records nowadays? Twelve year old kids? Who buys Michael Jackson's records? Twelve year olds, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, maybe eighteen, twenty year olds, you know... I don't know who buys 50 million records of somebody. You know, I don't know... you can't, like, compete with a market that's geared for twelve year olds, you know, or fourteen or fifteen year olds. You have rock n' roll critics that are forty years old writing about records that are geared for people that are ten years old and making an intellectual philosophy out of it, you know.

BK: And you don't listen to that stuff?

BD: No, I don't listen to that stuff, and I don't listen to those critics. I've come up with a lot of people who should know a whole lot better, that at one time did and who've made a career out of writing about rock n' roll. Writing about rock n' roll, I mean, you know, how indecent can you be? You know, I'm not saying that it's all bad, people have to express themselves and so rock n' roll gives them a thrill, or did give them a thrill. Well, most of the people that I can think of as rock n' roll authoritarian people are people who have documented down what I remember growing up with as it started – right? So everybody knows where the roots of rock n' roll are. Everybody knows who does what, but to make such an intellectual game out of it is beside the point You know, it's not gonna really going to add anything to the history of popular music. It's just going to feed a lot of cynical people and self-righteous people who think they've got a claim on the rock n' roll goldmine, or whatever it is, you know. And I find that very distasteful.

Rainy Day Women # 12 & 35 plays

BK: Do you have... I'm not going to ask you which ones... but are there any things that you look back on and say, "Jesus, boy, that was a good one."?

BD: Oh yeah. I look at those... the songs you're talking about. I look at those songs. I can't write those songs today. I couldn't write those songs. No way. I look at those songs, 'cause I sing 'em all the time.

BK: You wonder where it came from.

BD: I wonder not only when and where it came from but how it or... yeah, where it came from, how it's constructed. Most of the songs I look at that way. Even the simpler songs. I look at that way. I couldn't do that now, and I don't even try, you know. I'd be a fool to try. I mean, there's no way I could try. There's a lot of good song-writers though. What I've done I've done all alone, you know, but song-writers, there's a lot of good ones, a lot of good song-writers, of my age, of my era.

AM: Like who, Bob?

BD: Randy Newman writes good songs, Paul Simon's written some good songs, I think *America* is a good song, I think *The Boxer* is a good song, I think *Bridge Over Troubled Waters* is an excellent song. I mean, he's written a lot of bad songs too, but everybody's done that, bad songs. Let's see, who do I think's good... some of the Nashville writers... Shel Silverstein writes great songs. Really, you know. Like he's one of my favorite song-writers. You know, you express the... whatever it is you're expressing, you're expressing it out of the amount of knowledge and light and inspiration you're giving on it, you know. If you're given this much, well that's what... then you just make that much out of it. If you're just given an inch, you know, then you've just got to make that as much as you can.

All Along The Watchtower plays

BK: Have you ever tried your hand at any of the other arts?

BD: Yeah, painting.

BK: Really. Do you do much of it?

BD: Yeah, not so much in recent years, but it's something I would like to do if I could... you've got to be in the right place to do it; you have to commit a lot of time to it. I'm gonna do this for a while, because one thing leads to another and you tend to discover things as you go along. So it takes time to develop it, but I know how to do it fundamentally enough so that once I get into the rhythm of it I could do it if I could hang with it long enough...

BK: Do you take time for yourself?

BD: Oh yeah, all my time's for myself. I don't have any public time. People think that's public time but that's really only... that's my time.

BK: That's a great place to be.

BD: Well, I mean, that's the place you were at when you were born. That's the place you should be. I mean, what's there to make you not be in that place? Because, you know, because you have to be part of the machine... so what if you're not part of the machine?

Lay, Lady, Lay plays

... I don't know if I've ever been happy to tell you, I mean, you know, talking straight. I don't know... I mean happy? I mean, I don't consider myself a happy, er... well, I don't consider myself unhappy, But I've never really thought of life in terms of happiness and unhappiness. It's just never occurred to me.

BK: Do you think of it in terms of growth?

BD: No. I never think in terms of growth. I tell you what I do think though, that you never stop at anywhere, there's no place to stop at. You know them places at the side of the road that you can stop (laughs) **they're just an illusion.**

BK: The road goes on.

BD: Yeah, you've got to get back on the road. And that's all them places to stop at... that's all they are, I mean, you may want to stop, you know, but you can't stay there.

BK: When you say, I mean when you talk about going along the road, isn't that in a sense growth? Or at least it's movement, I guess, from point A to point B, to point C, to point D.

BD: Well, that's growth, yeah. But what's growth? I mean, everything grows, that's just the way life is, life just grows, you know. It grows and it dies. It lives and it dies. But wherever you get to a plateau, you get, you know... that's not it, you got to go to the next one. You can't stay nowhere; there's no place to stay – there's no place that will keep you.

BK: Because of boredom or just because that's the way it is?

BD: No, that's the nature of things, you know.

BK: So you see yourself just moving onward and...?

BD: I see everybody like that way. I see the whole world that way. That which doesn't do that is stuff which... it's dead., you know.

BK: Ha. What's that line? Those that are not busy being born are...

BD: Busy dying. What a line!

BK: Didn't somebody write that one?

BD: Classic line that.

It's All Right, Ma plays

You know, people say, well isn't it great to be able to do what you do? Well, it is to a degree but they forget that an artist... a touring artist, anybody that is out touring... playing live from town to town night after night. Do you think that's easy. It's not easy. Do you think that people are having a ball. I mean, people say, talk to you and... "howya doin'," I say "I'm in Schenectady" (Laughter)**. You know, "Oh yeah, well, you're having a great time, you know. I'm stuck here in Orlando". But it's not, you know, I mean, you just have to get up and you, you know, like it's... you have to do what you're supposed to do. So you have to do that. But, I know that when I get off the road, oh man! For the first two or three or four weeks even, maybe if it's that long... I mean, for the first week anyway until it gets boring being off the road. But for the first week off the road, I mean, you can get up any time you want, you know! You don't have to go to sleep at this hour and get up at that hour, and get yourself lined up to do this, and, you know, be here in that certain place, and have to go through this and go through that, and then get back and get the proper amount of sleep and eat right, you know, and you're afraid to get sick, you know, afraid you're gonna hurt yourself someplace along the line. All those things, like, you know... they just disappear on the last show, then you can do anything you want. I mean, it's a high feeling.**

BK: You go sailing?

BD: (Pause) **Yeah.**

BK: I mean do you want to talk about anything you like to do other than... that's personal...

BD: I like to do a lot of things but I don't want to talk about the things I like to do.

BK: OK.

BD: I'll talk about things I don't like to do!

BK: You said that you consider yourself a pretty regular kind of a guy. I mean, you said you're just like anybody else?

BD: Well sure. I mean, you know, I breathe the same air as everybody does, and I have to do the same things most people do. Yeah!

BK: So, you don't feel very like... 'cause, a lot of lyric... perhaps the earlier songs there's a sense of separation.

BD: Oh, well, I mean, you know, there's always a sense of separation. I mean, even in the later songs. There wouldn't be any point to it if there wasn't any sense of separation. I mean, if I was just going out, if I was just saying... if I didn't have anything different, you

know, to say that people could quite, you know... if it didn't come from some place where somebody wasn't really looking at it that way, then what would be the point of it? You know, I could do a Ronnettes album.

Tangled Up In Blue plays.

AM: I think the most interesting thing you've said so far, Bob...
BD: Have I said anything interesting?
AM: One thing that was exceptionally interesting to me was that when you said that you started writing because nobody was writing the songs you wanted to sing.
BD: That's when I started writing. That's why I'm still writing.
BK: So you can write... you do it for you.
BD: I wish somebody would come along and give me some songs that I could do. I mean, it would be such a burden taken off my shoulder, you know. I mean, it's heavy man! (laughs)**.**
BK: To write all those songs, and you're Bob Dylan, and they expect... there still is a lot of expectation. Have you been able to get beyond that, of worrying about what people expect out of you?
BD: Who expects what? I mean, anybody that expects anything from me is insane... is just a borderline case, you know. Nobody in any kind of reality is going to expect anything from me. I've already given them enough: what do they want from me, you know? You can't keep depending on one person to give you everything.

Gotta Serve Somebody plays

You know, like my thing is usually done with... OK I've gotta write this song. The song will be with a lyric or with a rhythm, or whatever it is for the song. But, and then you make the record. But for me, it's never been about making records, I can make good records. But for me... I have to go out and play, you know, and er... I'm not about all that stuff like videos and things. I mean, I wouldn't mind making videos, but it's nothing for me to try and really attempt to do... it's because everything is fake you know... you do, it's like making a movie, it's all fake, you know, they can do this take again, that take again. So, it's all on how good it looks... anybody can make a video. Anybody. All you need is a camera. Whatever you want. What kind of a camera do you want? 16mm or video camera, anybody can do it. And anybody can make a good one, and... er... people will like it. Show people what's done in a technological kind of way and they're not going to know what to think about it so they're gonna like it... you can, you know, dress it up in so many different kinds of ways. So many different kinda ways that people don't know what to think. Nobody's gonna sit there and say "oh this is bullshit", you know, nobody's gonna sit there and look at something on video or television and say "this is awful," you know, or "this don't make any sense at all". You know, whoever's gonna say that, you know, and say "stop making those stupid things". It's been a long time since I even seen one, but the last time I saw one, I mean I was appalled, you know. And then when you go see some of these groups, and I've seen some of them,... a few of the group... they aren't anything, you know, like, they're just nothing. And that's because they go for the faking thing so much, but, in the other arena, I mean, you have to do it live or you just don't do it You can't do it. I've always played live since I started out, I've always played live in front of a crowd and that's the only place that counts for me. It don't count on a video or a movie or... I don't care about being a movie star or video star or any of that stuff, you know.

Jokerman plays

My shows are usually at... I'm usually in a numb state of mind before a show, none whatsoever, and I have to kick in at some place along the line, usually it takes me sometimes one or two songs, sometimes it takes me much longer now. Sometimes it takes me to the encore! (Laughter)**. If I get an encore.**

BK: The band, I would imagine, has an effect on that.

BD: Oh, absolutely. I've played with some bands that have gotten in my way so much that it's just been a struggle to get through the show. Oh yeah... at certain times it just gets ridiculous, you know.

BK: I'd imagine the flip side too. There's probably bands that turn you on?

BD: Yeah, this last group we had was, I thought, were good.

BK: Rolling Thunder was an interesting tour; it was different for you. It wasn't just the performing but the whole idea of the thing. There was a spontaneity to it.

BD: Yeah. There definitely was a lot of spontaneity to that.

BK: Was it scary or exciting?

BD: A little of both. We were doing double shows on the Rolling Thunder shows. We'd be in a hall say for fourteen hours. Rolling Thunder shows were six hours long.

BK: That had to be people loving to make music.

BD: Well (Laughs)**, there were so many people. You know, that the people in the audience came and went; there'd be people lined up outside when other people left the show. People would bring their lunch, you know, or dinner or something.**

AM: Like a Grateful Dead concert?

BD: Yeah, yeah.

BK: Was that your idea? Did it come from you?

BD: No, that just happened. We started out with a small show and it just evolved into the...

BK: That's an amazing thing to me, that you're able to maintain that... a lot of people when they get to a certain place in the business...

BD: I thought the Rolling Thunder shows were great. I think someday somebody should make a movie about them.

BK: And call it...?

BD: Rolling Thunder!

BK: (Laughs). You've been smiling a lot and laughing a lot here. You don't do that much on stage. But you say you really enjoy yourself. You look so serious.

BD: Well, those songs take you through different trips, you see. I mean, you know, what's there to smile about if you can't... how are you gonna sing *A Hard Rain 's A-Gonna Fall*, or *Tangled Up In Blue*, or *With God On Our Side*, or *Mr Tambourine Man*, or *Like A Rolling Stone*, or *License To Kill*, or *Shot Of Love*, or *Poisoned Love*, you know, any of that. How can you sing that with a smile on your face? I mean, it'd be kind of hypocritical.

You Go Your Way And I'll Go Mine (live version) plays

You'll do things what you know on certain nights are just great. You'll know they're great and you get no response. And then you'll go someplace else and, you know, and it'll be... you just don't have it that night, you know, you just don't have it, I mean. For a variety of reasons. You don't have it and you're just kinda going through it... and it's really always got to be consistent. You get to get it to a place where it can be consistent. I mean, that's just the way it's gotta be. You got a place where it's consistent, but it's that level where it stays on... it can get great, which is really, you know, triple consistent But usually, I've done things that I was, you know, like I might have had a temperature of 104, you know, or I might have been kicked in the side that day and couldn't hardly stand up. I have done shows where I could hardly stand up, you know, where it's been painful to stand there. And that's kind of humiliating in a way, because

you know that there's no way that you can be as good as you wanna be., you know. I mean, you just know it... I mean, there's no way you'd know you can... not all you wanna be, but you could be. You know that this isn't... you're not gonna, before it even starts you know you're not gonna be as good as, not you wanna be, you can be, you know. I remember one time, only two... one time I've ever wanted to replay a show, that was in Montreal, we played a show in Montreal, in 1978. I had a temperature of 104, couldn't even stand up... and the promoter said, well you gotta play this show. And we played the show and I didn't have nothing, nothing! And there was a response... you thought, you'd think the Pope was there (laughs)**. And I've played other shows where I've had everything happening, I mean, I just rewrote the book. Nothing – no response.**

Knocking On Heaven 's Door (live version) plays

When I do whatever it is I'm doing there is rhythm involved and there is phrasing involved. And that's where it all balances out in the rhythm of it and the phrasing of it It's not in the lyrics. People think it's in the lyrics; maybe on the records it's in the lyrics, but in a live show it's not all in the lyrics, it's in the phrasing and the dynamics and the rhythm. It's got nothing whatsoever to do with the lyrics, I mean, it does, it does have something to do with the lyrics – the lyrics have to be there, sure they do. But, you know there was this Egyptian singer Om Khalsoum, have you ever heard of her? She was one of my favourite singers of all time, and I don't understand a word she sings! And she'd sing one song – it might last 40 minutes, same song, and she'll sing the same phrase over and over and over again, in a different way everytime. And no US or Western singer, I think, that's in that kind of category, you know... except possibly me (laughs)**. But on another level, do you know what I mean?**

Rainy Day Women # 12 & 35 (live version) plays

To me it's not a business, you know, and to the people who have survived along with me, it's not a business, It just isn't. It's never been a business and never will be a business. It just is just a way of surviving, you know, it's just what you do, you know. It's like... It's just like somebody who's been trained to be a carpenter, that's what they do, it's what they do best, you know. And that's how they make a living I guess.

BK: Were you ever going to be anything else, by the way? Were you ever going to be like an insurance salesman?

BD: I was never gonna be anything else, never. I was playing when I was twelve years old, and that was all I wanted to do – was play my guitar. I was always going to these parties where all these biggest guys were, you know, and it was a way, you know, of getting attention and whatever. It starts out that way but I didn't know where it was going to lead. Now that it's lead me here, I still don't know where it is.

BK: You sound like... like obviously you're older than you were in the sixties, but also to have a degree of self-knowledge and certainty about where you're going as a person.

BD: I don't know where I'm going as a person. No.

BK: No, really.

BD: No, but I hear contentment That's what I hear, much more contentment. Well, in certain areas, yeah, maybe, well, I sure hope so.

Like A Rolling Stone (live version) plays

I don't know what's gonna happen when I'm not around to sing anymore. I hope somebody else comes along, you know, who could pick up on what I'm doing and learn exactly what it is... that makes it quite different. I keep looking for that somebody that's gonna pick up on that either... not necessarily to cover me, but to take it a step further.

I've already taken it as far as I can take it, maybe I won't see that person. I don't know. But somebody, sometime will come along and take it another step further. No one who I have seen has taken what I have done any step further. I don't say that in a bragging sort of way, it just hasn't gone any further, you know.

BK: But there is something... that's why you go back to the stage.

BD: Yeah, for me, I mean, I'm just thankful I can play on the stage and people come and see me, you know. Because I couldn't make it otherwise. I mean, if I went out to play and nobody showed up that would be the end of me. I wouldn't be making records I'll tell you that I know that. I only make records because people see me live. So as long as they're coming along to see me live I'll just make more records, you know.

Blowin' In The Wind (live version) plays.

March 1985
Bill Flanagan Interview, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 261-271.
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Interview conducted by Flanagan for use in his book on rock and roll songwriters called *Written In My Soul* which he was in the process of compiling. Flanagan was formerly a reporter for the *Boston Globe* and *Rolling Stone*. Extracts from this interview were used in the concert program for the Spring '92 American tour.

BF: In *Don't Fall Apart On Me Tonight* (*Infidels*) you wrote, "It's like I'm stuck inside a painting that's hanging in the Louvre." In *I And I* (*Infidels*) you said, "If she wakes up now she'll just want me to talk / And I got nothin' to say, 'specially about whatever was." People come to you with so much expectation, do you have a hard time finding people who can relate to you normally?

BD: No, not really. I don't know how other people write their songs. I write them lots of different ways. Once they get put into a perspective, they all fall into the same dimension. But they really come out of different dimensions. Sometimes you'll write a song where you'll just stick with it and get it done. You'll feel that it's not coming from anyplace, but it's for you to do. There's nothing to base it on. You're in an area where there isn't anybody there and never was. So you just have to be real sensitive to where you're walking at the time. Not try to go one way or the other, just stay balanced and finish it. Every Grain of Sand is a song like that. Writing that song was like, "This is something that I'm going to have to stay steady with." Otherwise it could get out of hand. You must keep it balanced. And there's no footnotes around. It's the kind of an area where there's no precedent for it.

A lot of times you'll just hear things and you'll know that these are the things that you want to put in your song. Whether you say them or not. They don't have to be your particular thoughts. They just sound good, and somebody thinks them. Half my stuff falls along those lines. Somebody thinks them. I'm sure, when I'm singing something, that I'm not just singing it to sing it. I know that I've read it. Somebody's said it. I've heard a voice say that. A song like *Don't Fall Apart on Me Tonight* sort of falls into that category: "I'll take you to a mountaintop and build you a house out of stainless steel." That kind of stuff just passes by. A guy's getting out of bed saying don't talk to me; it's leaving time. I didn't originate those kinds of thoughts. I've felt them, but I didn't originate them. They're out there, so I just use them.

BF: Are there thoughts that go by that you resist writing about?

BD: Everything I've written about I can relate to. There's a lot of stuff I hear that I wouldn't write about, because it don't mean anything to me. You hear people talk every day, and most of it goes in one ear and doesn't even come out. Or it goes in then out the other. Bill Monroe once said he got his best thinking done when people were talking to him. I always liked that. Not a whole lot of real thought goes into this stuff. It's more or less remembering things and taking it down. Sometimes you're just taking notes on stuff and then putting it all together. Sometimes it's just the opposite. A lot of people ask, "What comes first, the words or melody?" I thought about that. It's very rare that they don't come together. Sometimes the words come first, sometimes the melody comes first, but that's the exception. Most of the time the words and melody come at the same time, usually with the first line. With me it's usually the first line. I know Bob Seeger writes from hooks and titles. A lot of people do that. They come up with a line that sums up everything and then they have to go backwards and figure out how to fill it in. With me

I usually start right at the beginning and then wonder where it's going. I sometimes fill in the middle and the end at some other time, but I don't usually work backwards.

BF: What do you mean when you say that with something like *Every Grain of Sand*, you have to be careful to not let it get out of hand?

BD: You're not conscious of it. In a song like that, there's no consciousness of any of this stuff having been said before. "What's this like?" Well, it's not like anything. "What does it represent?" Well, you don't even know. All you know is that it's a mood piece, and you try to hold onto the mood and finish. Or not even finish, but just get it to a place where you can let it go. Because those kinds of things you'll never finish if you don't do them all at one period of time. I've done a lot of stuff where I said, "I'll finish it next week." Well, next week never comes. And then you go back and look at the stuff and say, "Wow, this is great." but you can't get connected to it again.

The saddest thing about songwriting is when you get something really good and you put it down for a while, and you take for granted that you'll be able to get back to it with whatever inspired you to do it in the first place – well, whatever inspired you to do it in the first place is never there anymore. So then you've got to consciously stir up the inspiration to figure what it was about. Usually you get one good part and one not-so-good part, and the not-so-good wipes out the good part.

BF: Would you ever sit on something for months or years, waiting until you could connect to it again?

BD: No, I don't have any expectations, if I'm putting something down, that it'll be something great if only I can get back to it. I keep it in front of me for a while, and if I don't have it done by a certain time... I'll go back and it'll still be there, but I won't be able to relate to it.

BF: *Mr. Tambourine Man* can be interpreted a hundred ways, but it could be about a specific real thing: wanting to keep going when you've been out all night and everyone else has gone home, and the only other person left awake is some guy standing on the corner banging a tambourine. Do all your songs have a literal reality to you?

BD: Well, songs are just thoughts. For the moment they stop time. Songs are supposed to be heroic enough to give the illusion of stopping time. With just that thought. To hear a song is to hear someone's thought, no matter what they're describing. If you see something and you think it's important enough to describe, then that's your thought. You only think one thought at a time, so what you come up with is really what you're given. When you sit around and imagine things to do and to write and to think – that's fantasy. I've never been much into that. Anybody can fantasize. Little kids can, old people can, everybody's got the right to their own fantasies. But that's all they are. Fantasies. They're not dreams. A dream has more substance to it than a fantasy. Because fantasies are usually based on nothing, they're based on what's thrown into your imagination. But I usually have to have proof that something exists before I even want to bother to deal with it at all. It must exist, it must have happened, or the possibility of it happening must have some meaning for me.

I'm not going to write a fantasy song. Even a song like *Mr. Tambourine Man* really isn't a fantasy. There's substance to the dream. Because you've seen it, you know? In order to have a dream, there's something in front of you. You have to have seen something or have heard something for you to dream it. It becomes your dream then. Whereas a fantasy is just your imagination wandering around. I don't really look at my stuff like that. It's happened, it's been said, I've heard it: I have proof of it. I'm a messenger. I get it. It comes to me so I give it back in my particular style.

BF: That's what I mean about songs having a literal reality: the images aren't just random.

BD: Right. It does have a literal reality. I don't think it could stand up if it didn't. Because other people can identify with it, and they know if it's true or not.

BF: You've changed the lyrics to *Tangled Up in Blue* since you first recorded it on *Blood on the Tracks*.

BD: That was a peculiar record. I always wanted it to be the way I recorded it on *Real Live*, but there was no particular reason for it to be that way, because I'd already made the record. That was another one of those things where I was trying to do something that I didn't think had ever been done before. In terms of trying to tell a story and be a present character in it without it being some kind of fake, sappy attempted tearjerker. I was trying to be somebody in the present time while conjuring up a lot of past images. I was trying to do it in a conscious way. I used to be able to do it in an unconscious way, but I wasn't into it that way anymore. That particular song was built like that, and it was always open to be cut better. But I had no particular reason to do it because I'd already made the record. However, there's a version we used to do on stage with just electric guitar and a saxophone – keeping the same lyrics, thinking that maybe if I did that to it would bring it out in an emotional way. But it didn't hold up very well that way. So I changed the lyrics, to bring it up to date. But I didn't just change it 'cause I was singing it one night and thought, "Oh, I'm bored with the old words." The old ones were never quite filled in. I rewrote it in a hotel room somewhere. I think it was Amsterdam. I wanted to sing that song so I looked at it again, and I changed it. When I sang it the next night I knew it was right. It was right enough so that I wanted to put it down and wipe the old one out. That was another of those songs where you're writing and you've got it, you know what it's about, but half of it you just don't get the way you wanted to. Then I fixed it up, and now I know it's where it should be. I think it makes a big difference, too.

BF: One immediate difference is that it's no longer clear if it's only one guy telling the story. It now starts off in the second person, and goes into the first person when he meets the woman in the bar. The earlier section is now isolated, and the events it described may have happened to someone else.

BD: Yeah, exactly. See, what I was trying to do had nothing to do with the characters or what was going on. I was trying to do something that I don't know if I was prepared to do. I wanted to defy time, so that the story took place in the present and past at the same time. When you look at a painting, you can see any part of it or see all of it together. I wanted that song to be like a painting.

BF: Have you ever put something in a song that was too personal? Ever had it come out and then said, "Hm, gave away too much of myself there"?

BD: I came pretty close with that song *Idiot Wind*. That was a song I wanted to make as a painting. A lot of people thought that song, that album *Blood on the Tracks*, pertained to me. Because it seemed to at the time. It didn't pertain to me. It was just a concept of putting in images that defy time – yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I wanted to make them all connect in some kind of a strange way. I've read that album had to do with my divorce. Well, I didn't get divorced till four years after that. I thought I might have gone a little bit too far with *Idiot Wind*. I might have changed some of it. I didn't really think I was giving away too much; I thought that it seemed so personal that people would think it was about so-and-so who was close to me. It wasn't. But you can put all these words together and that's where it falls. You can't help where it falls. I didn't feel that one was too personal, but I felt it seemed too personal. Which might be the same thing, I don't know. But it never was painful. 'Cause usually with those kinds of things, if you think you're too close to something, you're giving away too much of your feelings, well, your feelings are going to change a month later and you're going to look back and say, "What did I do that for?"

BF: But for all the power of *Idiot Wind*, there's part of it that always cracked me up. You talk about being accused of shooting a man, running off with his wife, she inherits a million bucks, she dies, and the money goes to you. Then you say, "I can't help it if I'm lucky." (Laughter.)

BD: Yeah, right. With that particular set-up in the front I thought I could say anything after that. If it did seem personal I probably made it overly so – because I said too much in

the front and still made it come out like, "Well, so what?" I didn't really think it was too personal. I've never really said anything where I thought I was giving away too much. I mean, I give it all away, but I'm not really giving away any secrets. I don't have that many secrets. I don't find myself in that position.

BF: What about *Ballad in Plain D* [an early song in which Dylan described, in painful detail, his breakup with Susan Rotolo]?

BD: Oh! Yeah. That one... That one I look back and I say, "I must have been a real schmuck to write that." I look back at that particular one and say, of all the songs I've written, maybe I could have left that alone. But if that's the only one I look back and say maybe I shouldn't have written, I think that's a pretty good record. That's maybe five hundred to one.

BF: Now, you had temporarily split with your wife before *Blood on the Tracks*. That album must be at least somewhat about that.

BD: Yeah. Somewhat about that. But I'm not going to make an album and lean on a marriage relationship. There's no way I would do that, any more than I would write an album about some lawyers' battles that I had. There are certain subjects that don't interest me to exploit. And I wouldn't really exploit a relationship with somebody. Whereas in *Ballad in Plain D*, I did. Not knowing that I did it. At that time my audience was very small. It overtook my mind so I wrote it. Maybe I shouldn't have used that. I had other songs at the time. It was based on an old folk song. But I know what you mean. If you're going through some relationship and it's not working out well and that's the way you feel, no matter what else you see or what else you do you keep getting back to that: "Oh, I feel lousy." So you try to take it out and write a song about it. A lot of people can't do that. They have nobody to sing it to. So a person in my position says, "Well, I got this available information, this is the way I really feel; I think I'll write it and say how I feel." I don't do that. I don't like feeling those kinds of feelings. I've got to think I can do better than that. It's not going to positively help anybody to hear about my sadness. Just another hard luck story.

BF: In Nikos Kazantzakis's *Report to Greco*, he wrote that, like every man, as his life drew to a close he had to drag the cross he had made up his own Calvary – and that the work a man leaves behind on that ascent is just the blood on the tracks. Did you read that, or was that just a cosmic connection?

BD: Must have been, I hadn't read that. All the words have been used; it's just how we put them together. And even that – though we might think we've come up with something super, fantastic, I think if you look in the right place you'll find somebody else has done it.

BF: *Blood on the Tracks* was such a powerful work that it's amazing that you followed it with an album, *Desire*, on which you collaborated with a second lyricist, Jacques Levy. Why didn't you try to sustain what you'd tapped into with *Blood on the Tracks*? Why not try to keep it going?

BD: I guess I never intended to keep that going. It was an experiment that came off. I had a few weeks in the summer when I wrote the songs. I wrote all the songs for Blood on the Tracks in about a month and then I recorded them and stepped back out of that place where I was when I wrote them and went back to whatever I was doing before. Sometimes you'll get what you can out of these things, but you can't stay there. Co-writer. That was probably an album where I didn't have anything and I wasn't even thinking about making a record. I think I ran into Jacques downtown and we went off and just wrote some songs. The people from the Hurricane Carter movement kept calling me and writing me. And Hurricane sent me his book, which I read and which really touched me. I felt that the man was just innocent, from his writings and knowing that part of the country. So I went to visit him and was really behind him, trying to get a new trial. So that was one of the things I brought to Jacques, too. I said, "Why don't you

help me write this song and see if we can do something?" So we wrote *Hurricane*, and then we just wrote a bunch of others. An album came out of it.

BF: Have you been in touch with Hurricane Carter recently?

BD: No, I haven't seen him since the seventies. He got re-incriminated or whatever. I heard a lot of stories, good and bad, about what really happened. It just got a little out of hand, a little too complicated. But as I understand, he was set up again. They knew what buttons to push [note: Shortly after this conversation, Hurricane Carter's conviction was overturned.]

BF: Anything you've ever tried to write about and been unable to do?

BD: Yeah. Anything I try to write about, I can't do it. If I try to write about something – "I want to write about horses" or "I want to write about Central Park" or "I want to write about the Cocaine industry" – I can't get anywhere with that. I have to always take it out. It's like that Hurricane song. I wanted to write a song about Hurricane Carter, I wanted to spread the message. It really doesn't come out about Hurricane. Really, the essence of it is never what it's about. It's really about you. Unless you're standing in somebody else's shoes you just don't know what it feels like. You don't know what it's about. You can go to a movie and say, "What's this about?" A movie is something that gives the illusion of stopping time. You go someplace and you sit there for a while. You're looking at something. You're trapped. It's all happening in your brain and it seems like nothing else is going on in the world. Time has stopped. The world could be coming to an end outside, but for you time has stopped. Then someone says, "What was it about?" "Well, I don't know. It was about two guys who were after the same girl." Or, "It was about the Russian Revolution." Well, yeah, that was what it was about, but that wasn't it. That's not what made you stay there and stare at the screen, at a light on the wall. In another way you could say, "What's life about?" It's just going by like a movie all the time. It doesn't matter if you're here for a hundred years, it still goes by. You can't stop it. So you can't say what it's about. But what you can do is try to give the illusion of the moment of it. And even that's not what it's about. That's just proof that you existed. What's anything about? It's not about anything. It is what it is.

BF: Jackson Browne said that he thought *Every Breath You Take* was kind of unfair to the woman to whom it was directed, 'cause the song is told so powerfully from Sting's point of view and it's so inescapable.

BD: Oh, I don't think so. That was a good song. Sort of reminds me of *Stand By Me*. You can take any side you want. You don't have to tell the other person's side. There's no law that says you have to do that. I think he said whatever he had to say in that song pretty bluntly and right to the point. He didn't try to make it cute or clever or anything. He did it and was gone. I think that was a really good song.

BF: Do you think it's appropriate to write in the voice of a killer, as Bruce Springsteen did in *Nebraska*?

BD: I'm not too familiar with that particular song of Bruce's. But it's not inappropriate to put yourself in somebody else's place. That's a quite common thing to do. Folksingers used to do that all the time, and I've done a bit of that, too. *House of the Rising Sun* is written from a woman's point of view, and up until Eric Burdon did it, men used to sing it from a woman's point of view. That was something that you just did. If you go back and listen to the Stanley Brothers or the Country Gentlemen or Jim and Jesse, any of the bluegrass groups, there's quite a few songs where they put themselves into the first person. I've done that myself. I've written songs from the first person. I haven't recorded too many of them, but I have done it. That's legitimate.

BF: Sure. What I'm wondering about is, once you get in that person, once you give that person a voice, do you have a moral responsibility not to give voice to evil, not to say, "Why'd I kill all these people? I guess there's just a meanness in this world?"

BD: Is that what *Nebraska* says?

BF: Yes.

BD: I don't know. I don't know why you give a voice to one person and not another. But everybody's got a voice and there's somebody who can get inside of everybody and be their lawyer. Why not write a song for the guy who killed all the people at the McDonald's out in San Diego? I'm sure he's got a voice, too. And if he talked from the grave I'm sure he could get a lot of people to feel sorry for him, to sympathize with him. It depends on what your cause is. Is your cause to just go out and randomly shoot people? Kinky Friedman, I think, wrote a song about the guy who went up on the Texas tower and did that. But it's hard to tell. Usually you do that if somebody's been given a bad rap and you sort of know it. But I don't know what Bruce's intentions were. That song was about Charlie Starkweather? Well, I grew up in the same area as Charlie Starkweather and I remember that happening. That affected everybody out there. And everybody pretty much kept their mouth shut about it. Because he did have a sort of a James Dean quality to him. He was in the papers a lot. I must have been about seventeen or eighteen when that happened. I don't recall how most people felt about it. Nobody glorified him, though.

BF: Did you see *Badlands*, Terence Malick's movie about it?

BD: Yeah, I love Martin Sheen, I think he's a fantastic actor. But that didn't really remind me of Charlie Starkweather. I don't think it had anything to do with Charlie Starkweather. I went through that period of time and I remember it firsthand. I remember what the impact of that was. I don't think there's any way you can elevate Charlie up above what he did or what happened.

BF: Mark Knopfler told me that you wrote a song called *Prison Guard* about a complete skunk, and Mark took that song to be a sort of reaction to *Nebraska*.

BD: Oh, yeah, Mark heard that song. (Smiles.) **I did write a song like that but I never recorded it. I didn't think I needed to record it. It was a talking thing about this prison guard who's just sort of a rough character. He doesn't mind throwing people off the fourth tier and busting anybody's head in. And then it goes on to describe his family and his town. Then when I got done I just thought it was pretty pathetic. The whole picture was just too pathetic. I don't know what was in my mind when I was doing that.**

BF: But it wasn't inspired by or a takeoff on *Nebraska*?

BD: Uh. I don't know what inspired it. No. It was more or less one of these things where somebody in a uniform can get away with something that somebody who's not wearing a uniform can't.

BF: *Masters of War* is a very harsh song: "I'll stand o'er your grave 'til I'm sure that you're dead." *Neighborhood Bully* is equally hard, yet a lot of critics expressed surprise at its militancy. I don't understand why so many people assume you're a pacifist. The critic Mark Rowland said you were always more concerned with justice than politics.

BD: (Laughs.) **Yeah. I don't know why people choose to think whatever they think. Is pacifism a philosophy? I'm not really sure what it is.**

BF: If someone strikes you, you turn the other cheek.

BD: That's not pacifism, though. Turning the other cheek is an aggressive move, actually. There is some strategy where if someone pushes on you, you can go with their push and make their strength work against them. Pacifism. I know I'm not comfortable with those words and I wonder if other people are as comfortable with those broad terminologies like pacifism, rightism, leftism, militarism, republicanism. In this country a Republican is one thing: you can go to Ireland and say you're a Republican you'll get a different reaction. You can use all these words here. It's pretty safe to say anything you want to say. But whether there's any meaning to it or not, I don't know. I don't comprehend those terms simply because I don't think other people do. They talk about humanism and secularism, everything's got an ism. Not that I'm so stupid that I can't understand what they mean, but I don't think anybody else knows what they mean. To be perfectly honest, I don't think people know what they're talking about when they use all these words. They have no idea what they're saying. It's like saying, "I saw a house

yesterday." Oh yeah, I saw one, too. But it probably wasn't the same one you saw. But I hear that a lot. People seem to think they know all about me. Maybe they don't. Maybe everything I've done has been one side of something. One part. Certainly nothing that I've written defines me as a total person. There's no one song that does that. Nothing I do really should surprise anybody. It seems like I've been doing it for so long I can't remember when I wasn't doing it. There's nothing I could say that isn't documented somewhere in the past so you could think, "Yeah, he would say something like that."

BF: It's funny. When I was growing up people would always say, "Bob Dylan, oh, he writes a lot of songs against the Viet Nam War" and I had all those albums and I'd always say...

BD: Which ones? (Laughs.)

BF: Right, 'cause the songs they'd cite – like *Hard Rain* and *Blowin' in the Wind* – all predated Viet Nam. *I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine* has that very powerful image, "I dreamed I was amongst the ones that put him out to death." It's human nature to point at other people. It's rare an artist takes the position of saying, "We're all capable of being the villain."

BD: Well, I don't mind taking that position. Because that's just a true statement. We're all sinners. People seem to think that because their sins are different from other people's sins, they're not sinners. People don't like to think of themselves as sinners. It makes them feel uncomfortable. "What do you mean sinner?" It puts them at a disadvantage in their mind. Most people walking around have this strange conception that they're born good, that they're really good people – but the world has just made a mess of their lives. I had another point of view. But it's not hard for me to identify with anybody who's on the wrong side. We're all on the wrong side, really.

BF: You integrate your faith into the songs more subtly than at the time of *Slow Train Coming*.

BD: Now I'm just writing from instinct. I do that most of the time anyway. I just write from instinct and however it comes out is how it comes out. Other people can make of it what they choose to. But for me I can't expound too much on what I'm doing because I really don't have any idea what I'm doing. But I'll tell you one thing, if you're talking just on a scriptural type of thing, there's no way I could write anything that would be scripturally incorrect. I mean, I'm not going to put forth ideas that aren't scripturally true. I might reverse them, or make them come out a different way, but I'm not going to say anything that's just totally wrong, that there's not a law for.

BF: One of the nice things about *Sweetheart Like You* is that anyone brought up with the Bible will hear that song one way, but the song will still work on a different level for someone else.

BD: Oh, I think so, yeah. Because the Bible runs through all U.S. life, whether people know it or not. It's the founding book. The founding fathers' book anyway. People can't get away from it. You can't get away from it wherever you go. Those ideas were true then and they're true now. They're scriptural, spiritual laws. I guess people can read into that what they want. But if you're familiar with those concepts they'll probably find enough of them in my stuff. Because I always get back to that.

BF: Do people you know recognize themselves in your songs?

BD: Oh, yeah, a lot of people do. They tell me they're so-and-so. They used to anyway. "Einstein disguised as Robin Hood" would be in the hallway. A lot of people would tell me they were this person or that person. Not so much anymore. It used to be more common than it is now.

BF: Did people sometimes get it right?

BD: No. Not really. But a lot of people can identify with the feelings I have and what I describe something as. I don't think it's anything more than that.

BF: A reporter for *Time* magazine named Jones went around saying that he was the inspiration for *Ballad of a Thin Man*. He got some articles written about him. I thought, "Geez, what a thing to brag about!"

BD: Yeah, there were a lot of Mister Joneses at that time. There obviously must have been a tremendous amount of them for me to write that particular song. It wasn't just one person. It was like, "Oh, man, here's the thousandth Mister Jones."

BF: Let's talk about the mechanics of writing. Do you write on guitar or piano, and does the music come into your head before you go to your instrument?

BD: Yeah, a lot of times riffs will come into my head. And I'll transpose them with the guitar or piano. A lot of times I'll wake up with a certain riff, or it'll come to me during the day. I'll try to get that down, and then lines will come from that. Or it could come on any instrument I can play. Electric guitar is different from acoustic guitar. Banjo style is really good, you can write good songs on the banjo. These are all real instruments. Then they have all the technological instruments, these little keyboard things. They give you all kinds of sounds. Those are – sort of – okay.

BF: You're not completely sold?

BD: They sound real good, but I haven't been too successful at using any of that stuff. But I write with a combination of instruments. My melodies are usually very simple. They have to be simple. Otherwise I couldn't remember them. If they were a little more complicated I couldn't remember them. So they have to be simple. And that's really about it. And then I write lines down. I have notes scribbled all over the place. Sometimes I'll go out and say, "Whatever else I do today, I'm going to write down all the lines that seem interesting to me. Either that I think of or that I overhear." I'll try to stay committed to that for a certain period of time. Because most of the time you don't do that. The stuff that goes by, you think of and then say, "Okay, I thought about it. Big deal. Who cares?" Or you'll hear something amusing and then forget that, too. Sometimes I'll make an effort to just go out and get that stuff and see if it means anything. And sometimes it does. I'll just put it somewhere and then get back to it sometime. Usually if it has meaning for me, it's important. There's a lot of great things you hear that aren't really that relevant. That's really about it. There's no real complicated deep genius quality to it.

BF: That's easy for you to say, you've written all these great songs.

BD: Well, I think it has more to do with instinct. There's nothing studied about it. I think you just have to trust your own instinct.

BF: You sang at Martin Luther King, Jr. 's March on Washington. Did you ever meet him?

BD: No. I heard him speak but I never met him.

BF: Did you know John Coltrane?

BD: I've seen John Coltrane. Yeah. I watched him play. I've seen him, I've seen Monk, Miles a lot, Horace Silver. I did some sessions once with Don Cherry and Billy Higgins. I really don't know what happened to that stuff. There were a lot of jazz guys around in the coffeehouse scene in the Village. The folk music and jazz clubs and poetry were all kind of the same thing back then. I used to see those guys a lot. What they had that I picked up on in my singing – I can hardly even call myself a singer – was a sense of phrasing and dynamics.

BF: I heard Bill Cosby say one night that when he was starting out as a comic in the Village he'd walk back and forth across the street and hear you playing in one club and John Coltrane in another. Were you conscious of how much ground was being broken?

BD: No. Nobody was really conscious of what was happening. But there were a lot of different people on the street. I remember when Bill Cosby came to town. He used to work at the club I worked at. He was a stand-up comedian then. He was just another one of the guys, another entertainer. He got work a little faster than most people, I think, but I'd already started playing. I used to eat with Bill all the time.

BF: You're famous for going into the studio and recording very quickly to catch the moment. But a couple of your recent albums, *Slow Train* and *Infidels*, were more labored over.

BD: See, when I started to record they just turned the microphones on and you recorded. That was the way they did it back in the sixties. Whatever you got on one side of the

glass was what came in on the controls on the other side of the glass. It was never any problem. What you did out front was what you got on the tape. And it always happened that way. Whether you played by yourself or played with a band didn't really matter - there'd be leakage and that stuff, but you were pretty much guaranteed that whatever you did on that side of the glass was going to be perceived in the same kind of way. That was never any problem. So what happened to me was, I kept working that way through the seventies. I didn't realize things had changed! (Laughs.) I really didn't. I don't think I knew you could do an overdub until 1978. I just didn't think about it. Maybe I was so outside of it that I hadn't realized that. The problem is, you can't record that way anymore. If you go into a studio now, the technology is so different that you might have a live sound that you want and you'll put that live sound down, but it won't sound that way on the other side of the glass. So then you have to contrive the sound to make it sound the way you really want. In other words, if you want to sound a certain way, whatever that way is, it'll never happen in the studio.

There's a kind of an outdated thing called "live excitement in the studio." It doesn't happen anymore, because people don't record that way. A lot of people put things down one track at a time. Things are so advanced that you'll be able to phone in your parts pretty soon. Anyway, the problem with it is that no matter what you do, it's not going to come out that way anyway. People try. Some people use a certain studio because it used to have a certain sound. But they might have changed all the equipment in the place, so it's not going to have that sound anymore. I like the old sound, but it's done. It's never going to come back. So you just have to deal with what the modern way is. A lot of my records have been made because it's – quote – time to make a record. "When's your new record going to be delivered?" "Oh, next month." Time for me to go in and make a record. I never used to think about it during the year. I had other things to do. Some of the seventies records were made on just one block of time. "This month I'm going to block all this time out, write the songs, record the songs, mix 'em, press 'em, get a cover together, and it's all out in a month or two." It took me a long time to get off that particular style. I didn't really enjoy it that way.

Sometimes I've never done the songs before – I'll just write 'em and put 'em somewhere. Then when I'm making a record I'll need some songs, and I'll start digging through my pockets and drawers trying to find these songs. Then I'll bring one out and I've never sung it before, sometimes I can't even remember the melody to it, and I'll get it in. Sometimes great things happen, sometimes not-so-great things happen. But regardless of what happens, when I do it in the studio it's the first time I've ever done it. I'm pretty much unfamiliar with it.

In the past what's come out is what I've usually stuck with, whether it really knocked me out or not. For no apparent reason. I've stuck with it, just from lack of commitment to taking the trouble to really get it right. I didn't want to record that way anymore. Now I'm recording more than I used to record. About two years ago I decided to get serious about it and just record. Because I do need records out and I do have deadlines and commitments. It's been a big struggle to come up with them at certain times. So rather than do that, what I do now is just record all the time. Sometimes nothing comes out and other times I get a lot of stuff that I keep. I recorded this album [Empire Burlesque] **for a long time. I just put down the songs that I felt as I wanted to put them down. Then I'd listen and decide if I liked them. And if I didn't like them I'd either re-record them or change something about them. I wanted to be the first one to judge it rather than put them out there to the people and have them do it.**

BF: Does the producer make a big difference?

BD: I produce my own records, really. I don't even know what a producer does. Producers usually get in the way. They're fine for picking you up at the airport and making sure all the bills are paid at your hotel. If they're really good producers, they'll find songs for you to sing that really make sense for you. But the producers I have aren't even really

like producers. They make a record sound right, but I haven't run into any that know any more about what I'm doing than I do.

BF: You've mentioned a couple of times how much you value conciseness but you're more responsible than anyone for breaking out of tight, structured song forms.

BD: Yeah. Well, I come out of that folk music/rock & roll structure. So that's the only kind of structure I really deal with. I don't consider myself a pop songwriter like Burt Bacharach/Hal David, even Lionel Richie. I think you have to be too relaxed a person, you have to have too much patience (laughs) **to do that sort of thing. But I don't know what I've done. I usually think of myself as last. When I think of songwriters I don't really think of myself. I think of other people. I know I'm doing it, too. But it gives me more of a kick to see somebody else do it. I need to do it. Like that Jonathan Richman. I get a kick out of that. I'd rather listen to that. Whereas my stuff, I need to do it, I have to do it, I'm inside it all the time. So I've got a get out of it. When I hear my old stuff I just think of how badly it was recorded.**

BF: Has there ever been a time when you didn't want to write, to perform? There've been periods when we didn't hear from you.

BD: I've tried to get away from it, but I never could. It's all I've ever done, really. I'm still hearing stuff that was made in the fifties and the sixties that maybe I heard once and forgot about or maybe I never heard.

BF: Do you ever think maybe you'd like not to be tuned into it all the time, not receiving? Maybe the muse could give you a break?

BD: No. That would scare me. I wouldn't know what else to do. I would be lost.

The Wicked Messenger #884(2595) 27 June 1993 add this information:

[Re: Jesse Winchester's album on Rhino R2 70085) Bill Flanagan's liner notes are entitled LOOKING FOR JESSE and are dated June 1988. Here is the section relating to Dylan:-

> "A few years ago, I wrote a book about rock's best singer/songwriters, and Bob Dylan said to me, **Have you talked to Jesse Winchester. You can't talk about the best songwriters and not include him.** I agreed, but Jesse Winchester was still a hard man to find. A while later, I was having dinner with T-Bone Burnett and he said, 'Is Jesse Winchester in your book? He's one of the greats'. Elvis Costello said the same thing."

17 June 1985
Rockline Interview, Hollywood, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 499-509.

A live broadcast interview conducted by Bob Coburn in Hollywood, California during the month of June 1985 which was transmitted on peak-time nationwide radio achieved by linking up with a host of local radio stations all across the U.S. and Canada through the Global Satellite Network. This interview takes the form of a telephone chat-show where Bob answers questions from various callers (C1, C2, C3, etc.) with Coburn showing remarkable agility at keeping things moving. This was Dylan's first chat-show in almost twenty years, since the Bob Fass show of 1966. The interview is interspersed with tracks from his then new album *Empire Burlesque*. The quality — to quote Paul Williams — "Dumb show, dumb questions and Dylan responds with dumb, weary answers".

Taken from the circulating tape.

BC: Hello again. I'm Bob Coburn, your host for *Rockline*, brought to you by *Budweiser*, the king of beers. Tonight, *Rockline* has a very special evening with Bob Dylan. As always we have plenty of phone lines but just one number to remember in the U.S.: that number is toll-free, 1800 222 ROCK, that's 18002227625. And one number for Canada too, toll-free as well 1800 344 ROCK, that's 1800 344 ROCK. *Empire Burlesque*, the new release by Bob Dylan rekindles the wit, spirit and leadership that Dylan embodied in the sixties and early seventies. This album sizzles with emotions, stimulates with intellect and satisfies musically. And *Rockline* welcomes Bob Dylan. Nice to have you here tonight.

BD: Nice to be here.

BC: Now this is amazingly the first American release that you've given us with printed lyrics, and the first one you've self-produced. Why did it take it so long to get to that point?

BD: Well, I put the lyrics on so nobody would mistake the words, which so often they do that you know.

BC: Aha, and why wait so long to self-produce? Did you finally feel that you could do it better than anybody else? The way that you want it this time.

BD: Yeah, I did. I did.

BC: That's really it? Er, thirty releases, most of them have been really landmark releases. How do you feel about this current release? Is this one of your best do you think?

BD: I like it.

BC: You like it; well, we're going to hear a bunch of songs from it tonight. And we'll put you on the air with Bob Dylan too... right, now a song from *Empire Burlesque – Tight Connection To Your Heart*.

Tight Connection To My Heart plays.

BC: It's an evening with Bob Dylan tonight on *Rockline*. I'm Bob Coburn and our first phone call for you tonight, Bob, is from Chicago. Doug, this is Bob Dylan.

C1: Hi Bob, how are you?

BD: Oh, I'm doing alright.

C1: Oh good. I've just got to say that I think your new album is fantastic, and I was just wondering like if you're going to tour, and if so then who's going to be in your band?

BD: Oh, I don't know. I don't know just yet. I might use some old people I've used and probably some new people.

BC: You are going to go on tour though?

BD: Oh yeah, I always do.

BC: Yeah, it seems like it. Well there was a period quite a few years ago where, you know, sometimes you didn't, but that has changed. Any players on the album you think might be in there? You've got some big stars on the album, Mick Taylor and Ron Wood.

BD: Well Mick was with me on the last tour I did, and there's always talk about Sly and Robbie...

BC: As the rhythm section. We'll wait and find out. Thanks for the call Doug. Now we have a call from Knoxville, Tennessee. Alan, you're on the show.

C2: Hi Bob, I wanted to say thanks for the last twenty three years of music and I really do love your new album.

BD: Well, thank you.

C2: I was wondering what poets you feel, like, have had the most influence on your writing?

BD: Hm, John Keats; I used to read him quite a bit. Now let's see, the French poet Arthur Rimbaud and, er, all those guys in the 50's, Ginsberg and Corso and those guys—

BC: Anything else Alan?

C2: No. I think that's it.

BC: Alright. Thanks for the call. There's a joke that's been running around Sylvester Stallone starring as Arthur Rimbaud.

BD: Oh yeah.

BC: We'll talk to Ronald. He's in Carlisle, Ohio, in Dayton. Hi there.

C3: Hi there Bob. I just want to say that it's a great honor for me to talk to one of the great Christian rock artists of the century. And was it a big inspiration for you to have Jimi Hendrix record your song *All Along The Watchtower*?

BC: Was that a big thrill for you or, what were your feelings at the time?

BD: Oh yeah, that was a big thrill. He recorded *All Along The Watchtower* and another song off *John Wesley Harding* called *Drifter's Escape*, I think. And he recorded *Like A Rolling Stone*. But he made *All Along The Watchtower* something different, you know. When we play it now in person its more like how Jimi would have played it.

BC: What were you going to say there, Ronald?

C3: Yeah, it is. I thought it was really a great song.

BC: When that album came out it wasn't received as one of your best records, but, in retrospect, now it appears to be one of your strongest albums – *John Wesley Harding*. What do you feel about that?

BD: Really, I don't know if it really was one of the strongest albums, it was OK you know.

BC: You just think that is an OK record?

BD: I do, yeah.

BC: Huh, interesting. Thanks for the call Ronald. We'll turn our view to Brooklyn now... Rich, you're on the *Rockline*.

C4: Hello, I'll get right to my question. I'd like to know who are the women on the back of the *Infidels* album cover and the latest album cover?

BD: Hm, let's see. Well, the women?

BC: Well, there's one woman on the back.

BD: Oh yeah, there's half a woman! That's a picture that was taken at a party somewhere. As you can see by my expression in the picture I don't really know who she is even (laughs)**.**

BC: It's a drawing on *Infidels*.

BD: Oh, that picture. Who is that?

BC: What were you saying there Rich?

C4: Yeah, I can't hear you. Could you speak up a little bit?

BC: Oh, OK. We'll try and accommodate you, all right. Do you remember who those people are? This is just a drawing.

BD: Hm, well the woman is someone I knew... (laughs)**. The man I think I was wishing to be me, I guess.**

C4: The striking resemblance to Joan Baez, especially the sketch on the last album cover.

BD: Oh yeah! It does kind of look like her, but it's not her though.

BC: It's not her. Good try though, Rich.

C4: Oh, by the way, I just had one more small question. What do you think of Joan Baez's imitation of you during her concerts?

BD: Well, I think Joan is fabulous, you know. Anything she does usually sounds pretty good.

C4: OK, thanks a lot. Nice talking to you, Bob.

BC: Thanks for the call Rich. Our numbers are toll-free in Canada and the US. From the album *Infidels* that we were just kind of looking at the back of. This is *Neighborhood Bully* by Bob Dylan on *Rockline*.

Neighborhood Bully plays.

BC: *Infidels* — *Neighborhood Bully* by Bob Dylan, my guest tonight, for the full ninety minutes tonight, on *Rockline*, and we wouldn't have it any other way. We have a call from Toronto... John, you're on the *Rockline*.

C5: Hi Bob. You worked with Mark Knopfler on a couple of albums. How did that come about?

BD: Well, I met Mark on the *Slow Train* album, and we just kept in touch over the years you know.

BC: Did you get in touch with him and say, hey, come play on my record, or did he call you? How did it happen?

BD: The first time it was Jerry Wexler who did that, and then the second time I ran into him in New York, and he had just released the previous album to his latest one.

BC: He certainly has his own style, but people in the beginning especially were saying he sounds a lot like Bob Dylan. Did somebody say that maybe you two should get together?

BD: Well no, not really. Jerry recommended him to play on that album, and, you know, I went down to see him and I thought he sounded sort of like me, not really but a little bit.

BC: Yeah, just a touch maybe. He's a great player. Thanks for the call John.

BD: Er, I don't play anything like guitar like he does, though.

BC: Yeah. He can really play some leads. Thanks for the call John, we do appreciate it. We have another call from Chicago; they're cooking there tonight... and we'll talk to Rich. Hi Rich.

C6: Hi, Bob. Yeah. This is Rich Ingle from Chicago. How you doing?

BD: I'm doing alright.

C6: Good. Er, I'd like to ask you about a tape I've heard which sounds like it comes off an acetate from the *Self Portrait* sessions, and on the tape you do the song *Yesterday*. What I'd like to know is, was George Harrison at the session and did he play on that with you?

BD: Well, I don't remember that.

C6: Er, maybe I can help refresh your memory. Also on that session you did the song *Da Do Ron Ron*.

BD: Hmm.

C6: You don't remember it yet?

BD: Well it must have been an old one (laughs)**.**

C6: It sounds like it's from *Self Portrait*. It sounds like that period. You also did an electric version of *Song To Woody* and *Mama You Been On My Mind*.

BD: Oh! well, maybe George was playing on that; we did do some sessions.

C6: Did you do an album together that you didn't release or something?

BD: I don't think so.

C6: No. How about that new song that he has out that you wrote — *I Don't Want To Do It*.

BD: Oh yeah, he dug that up somewhere.

C6: Was that from around that time?

BD: Yes it was.

C6: OK Bob. I just wanna tell you that I think that the new album is great and just keep up the great work.

BD: Well, thank you.

BC: Thanks for the call there Rich. Do you have tons of material that's never been released? I know you recorded over twenty songs for *Empire Burlesque*. Is there a lot of backlog material?

BD: Well, there's a lot of stuff, you know, that's just laying around in parts. Some are songs and some are just parts: lots of that kind of stuff.

BC: Well, I'd like to see some of that stuff. We'll talk to Michael now. He's in Norfolk, Virginia. You're on the show Michael.

C7: Good evening Bob. How you doing?

BD: I'm doing fine.

C7: Er, What have you been listening to recently? Any good music?

BD: Hm, you ever heard of a group called *Fishbone*? I thought they're pretty good.

C7: You been listening to any jazz?

BD: Oh yeah.

C7: Tell me something, did you ever record any tunes as Blind Boy Grunt?

BD: I'm sure I did. (Laughs)**. That was a few years ago I think.**

C7: OK Bob. I just wanna say thanks for the thrill.

BC: Thanks for the call Michael, we appreciate it. We'll talk to Peter now in Santa Monica. How you doing Peter?

C8: Oh, I'm doing great. I'm very excited to talk to Bob.

BC: Well take advantage of it, you're on the air.

C8: Oh great. The question I wanted to ask is that I consider you one of the people who have proven that one person can change the world, make a difference in the world. First of all I want to ask you if you agree with that and, if no, respond to that.

BD: Oh yeah, I do agree with that I don't know if I've ever done anything like that but a lot of the great changes in the world were brought about by one person for sure.

C8: Aha, do you think that in the sixties it happens, you know, there was that energy – you know, everybody was listening to your music and it promoted them to do things. Whereas here in the eighties there's more of a hope that one person can't do as much. Do you feel that that's what's happening?

BD: Well maybe, but that'll probably change.

C8: Alright, I want to identify myself as Peter Landecker, the person who's doing this show about you. And I wanted to ask you... I've put together this show which is a collection of your words and music. The thing I'm concerned about is when people see this show – a collection of your words and music – and they're going to leave the theatre, what kind of a feeling would you want them to leave with?

BD: I don't really know, 'cause I do my own shows. So somebody else who's doing them, you know, I don't know what they're doing.

BC: We'll take a time out and return with Bob Dylan our guest for the full ninety minutes on *Rockline*... We're gonna play a song now that was done by the Textones. It's on Bob's new album. He wrote it, of course. It's called *Clean Cut Kid*.

Clean Cut Kid plays.

BC: *Clean Cut Kid* by Bob Dylan on the *Rockline*. My guest for the full ninety minutes tonight. Ron Wood of Stones fame on guitar on that track, sounding good. We're going to talk to somebody in Little Rock, Arkansas right now, and this is Rust. Is that correct?

C9: That's right. Hello there Mr. Dylan. I want to say one thing first before I ask my question. I want to tell you that you're number one on the top of my list of musicians, for the simple reason that when I was twelve years old I listened to you and I picked up the harmonica and I'm still playing and I'm twenty eight years old. Well, my question is here -that I've

been thinking about for a while is – have you ever planned to take any of your private works and poetry and maybe simultaneously with autobiography write a book?

BD: No, I never did plan that. I haven't had time. I've been asked about it though. Maybe one of these days you know.

C9: Aha, and I think that producing your own LP there is a great accomplishment and I hope to hear a lot from you in the future because I think that you're one of the best, sir.

BD: Well thank you.

BC: Alright. That's a from the heart call and we appreciate it there, Rust and thanks for the call. We'll talk to somebody in Milwaukee now, his name is Randy. Randy, meet Bob Dylan.

C10: Hi Bob. Listen, in 1976 I bought your first album and *Hurricane* struck me, like, first, but *Isis* has always haunted me and I wanted to know what you meant by the song *Isis*.

BD: Hm... Well, it's kind of like a journey, you know, like sort of a journey type trip. I wrote that with another person and I think half the verses were mine and half the verses were his, and it just sort of ended up being what it was. I don't really know too much in depth what it would mean.

BC: Who did you co-write that with?

BD: Jacques Levy.

BC: Jacques Levy, and the basis I guess is Egyptian mythology, Isis being a goddess. Is that what it stemmed from?

BD: (Laughs) **I guess so.**

BC: You're not sure. Anything else on your mind there Randy?

C10: Well, um, *Like A Rolling Stone* is like my favorite song and I appreciate him writing that. And I want to tell him that.

BC: Right. We appreciate that. We'll talk to Philip now. He's in... I believe in Illinois. Where you calling from Phil?

C11: I'm calling from Indiana.

BC: OK, sorry about that. You're on the air.

C11: Yeah, hi Bob. I was wondering how did you get involved in the *USA for Africa*.

BD: Oh, Ken Cregan had called and asked me about it.

BC: And who is Ken Cregan? What does he do?

BD: Well, he put that together. He's the manager of Lionel Richie. That's how I got involved.

BC: Did you have any hesitation or say "Yeah, I'll be there". What was your reaction?

BD: Oh, I said I'll be there.

BC: And you were. We're gonna listen to a song that's Randy's favorite cut. How can we not play *Like A Rolling Stone* by Bob Dylan on *Rockline*.

Like A Rolling Stone plays.

BC: A song that's burned into the mind of anyone who went through the sixties, *Like A Rolling Stone*, originally on *Highway 61 Revisited*. So many of your songs, Bob, have been re-recorded by other people, yet I don't think I've ever heard another version of that. Have you? Is there another version of that?

BD: Yeah. Jimi Hendrix did it, and a couple of others did it.

BC: Oh yeah, that's right. Boy, that's a song that you'd better do something really fine with, 'cause that one you don't mess with. That one's sacrosanct almost. We'll talk to Jeff now. He's in Knoxville, Tennessee. Jeff, you're on the *Rockline*.

C12: Well, what I wanted to ask you Bob was what possessed you to change your name from Robert Zimmerman to Bob Dylan.

BD: Hm, that's an interesting question. I really can't say. It's been so long. I think I was just playing somewhere one night and the club-owner asked me what my name was, and that was the name that came into my mind. I don't think there was really anything really profound about it.

BC: Are the stories that it was taken from the poet Dylan Thomas true?

BD: Well, I think I'd heard... (laughs)... **I'd heard that story and I knew who Dylan Thomas was, but I'm not sure if I was familiar with his poetry or not.**

BC: Yeah. Interesting, Jeff. Did you have another question?

C12: Well, the second part of my question was, what's your favorite album and your favorite song? That's what I wanted to know.

BD: Favorite album? I think the Robert Johnson album. I listen to that quite a bit still.

BC: Some of that old blues stuff, huh. Do you have a favorite of any of your records? Is there one that stands out as your all-time album?

BD: Hm, I like 'em all you know when I make 'em. And then I don't listen to them too often after they're released.

BC: Time to move on I guess. Thanks for the call. We'll talk to Ken now, he's in Cleveland... Hi.

C13: Hi, how you doing Bob?

BD: I'm doing alright.

C13: Alright. I'd just like to comment, the Young Rascals also did *Like A Rolling Stone*. Also my favorite song is your *115th Dream* on *Bringing It All Back Home*. That brings me to my question. Right before the release of that album there was a rumor and album called *Bob Dylan In Concert*, and the rumors are that there was a disagreement between you and Columbia over what would be on the album and it was never released. Any chance of us hearing it ever?

BD: Hm, that must've been... that may have been the second album. They asked me to change a few songs I think.

C13: The *John Birch Society Blues* material?

BD: Yeah, I think so. I think they requested that I drop that from the record.

C13: Do you think in these less prudent times that it could come out?

BD: (Laughs) **Yeah. It probably could now.**

C13: Well, you gonna shoot for it, maybe?

BC: (Laughs) Definite ulterior motive there. Fire off a letter to the record company and see what you can get going there, Ken.

BD: They have the rights to that. They could release it.

C13: Well, you know, I'll bet you'll have a little more push in the matter than I would.

BC: You might have a point there. Thank you for the call Ken. We appreciate it. It's Jim's turn. He's in Toronto. Hi Jim.

C14: Oh hi. First of all I've got to say that this is like talking on heaven's line. You're it to me. You're the end all. I guess what I want to ask you about is, is creative desire in general. But, to pose it, I'm an artist and I'm just starting out, and I want to know how you think your music has changed from the beginning when you had to give in to some kind of commercial ideas, compared to now where basically you're set and you can record whatever you want. Has that affected you?

BD: Well, I've just about all the time recorded whatever I want, erm, you know, but my music, my musicianship, is so limited that I just work within that round. I stay pretty much to that so I can do most anything I wanna do within that small framework.

C14: It hasn't really ever changed then, from when you first started out?

BD: No, I don't think so.

C13: The other thing I wanted to ask you, and I've read an awful lot about you, and I've also read about other artists in general because I am an artist – a painter. Er, you don't seem to have gone through, at least to my knowledge, any kind of really trying times that most of the other artists have – that have reached the kind of heights and success that you have. I'm talking artistically not commercially. Is there anything I'm missing? Is there anything that sort of changed your direction in life, that made you, you know, gave you the creative desire that made you so prolific?

BD: No, I can't say what it is you know. A lot of times I even think about stopping. But sometimes it just keeps coming so, so long as it does, I just keep bringing it out.

BC: Yeah, don't stop please. Jim's hit on a really good point, in that in the early days you sounded like you had been around and really paid the dues, but were only eighteen years old, back in the early days when you left Minnesota and went to New York. You don't know what you had? That explains it all. Bob Dylan says, if you want somebody you can trust, *Trust Yourself*.

Trust Yourself plays

BC: A couple of Heartbreakers on that song, Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench. Bob Dylan's *Trust Yourself* from *Empire Burlesque*. Our calls are toll-free in the U.S. and Canada... Still plenty more time for you to talk to Bob Dylan tonight on *Rockline*. I'm Bob Coburn. Marie called from Pittsburg. Hi.

C15: Hi, first I'd like to wish you a happy birthday, a little belated.

BD: Well, thank you.

C15: I was wondering, are you going to do any more movies, you know, like *Dont Look Back* or *Pat Garrett*, or that?

BD: Oh, I sure hope so (laughs)**.**

BC: A little tongue in cheek there. Do you seriously have any plans for doing anything, or are you going to avoid that?

BD: Well, somebody sent me a script the other day. I don't know what makes them think I could to it, but it's a fairly interesting script.

BC: Ha, so don't rule that out. Thanks for the call Maria. Well talk to Brian now. He's in Warren, Ohio. You're on the show Brian.

C16: Hi, how you doing Bob?

BD: I'm doing alright.

C16: I notice you've been touring a lot in Europe, or have you been and, er... what do you like better, the European audiences or the American, and why?

BD: Well, mostly they're all the same. Sometimes you feel, like, you know, in a foreign country – you wonder how people can understand what you're saying. But it seems like they can. But, you know, I guess, maybe it's when you go over to Europe and play, I mean you've gone so far to do it, maybe people appreciate it differently.

BC: But there's really no discernible difference, you know, the crowds are the crowds.

BD: Well, yeah, it's just whether you're playing in an indoor arena or outdoors. There's difference in those kind of different kinda places you play. There's a different kind of vibe in the air.

BC: We're gonna play another song right now from *Empire Burlesque*. This one is a bit lengthy but we definitely wanted to get this on tonight. This is a song that's a tour de force from the latest LP *Empire Burlesque* – Bob Dylan on *Rockline*: *When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky*.

When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky plays.

BC: *When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky* is the name of that song. Bob Dylan, reunited with Al Kooper who worked on so many of the earlier Bob Dylan LP's. Nice to hear him back in the fold again, so to speak. That's from *Empire Burlesque*. We'll take a brief time out and return with more, with Bob Dylan on *Rockline*... It's a very special evening with Bob Dylan tonight on *Rockline*. I'm Bob Coburn. We're back on the phone lines, a call from Virginia, we have Tommy on the line. Tommy, you're on the air.

C17: Er, yeah, Mr Dylan, let me first start by saying that I really enjoy your music, and er, your music is very deep and prophetic, very much like the late John Lennon. And I was just wondering what inspired you to write the song *Like A Rolling Stone*.

Pause.

BC: Do you remember the inspiration for that?
BD: Well, it was just a riff really. It was like the, you know, the La Bamba riff. I just...
BC: You mean Richie Valens.
BD: Yeah. I was just fooling with that I think.
BC: What were you going to say there Tommy?
C17: I was thinking, was there any significance to the time period or anything? Did it tell a story?
BD: Well, yeah, you know. It was so long ago I can't really remember the inspiration for it, but...
C17: OK. I really appreciate talking to you. It's been a great honor.
BC: Thanks for the call Tommy. You know it's hard to say what a song means because it means what it means to the person that hears it. You know, that's the beauty... that's called art.
BD: Yeah, it means what it means.
BC: Yeah. Let's talk to David. He's in Sierra Madre... David how are you tonight?
C18: I'm pretty good. Me and my buddy Pete would like to wish you a late happy birthday there. And, I was wondering, are you ever going to release the soundtrack to the movie *Renaldo and Clara*?
BD: I think that is released. Well, maybe four songs from it. But that's a good idea. I'd like to release that, but I don't know, you know, the record company usually have their own idea what they like to release and what they don't.
C18: Well, I watched the four hour version a couple of times.
(Dylan laughs)
and I wonder, was there any kind of particular meaning behind that movie: I never really caught it. I just went to see the music, you know.
BD: Well, there was, but it's hard to put it into words. I can't think I put it into one line.
C18: You probably can't explain it in the time that we've got.
BD: No.
BC: Well, thanks David; nice talking to you. OK Bob, we'll talk to George now in Detroit. George, meet Bob Dylan.
C19: Hi Bob, how you doing?
BD: I'm doing alright.
C19: How are your kids?
BD: Fine.
C19: That's good. A guy a couple before me already asked my question about what a song means to you. I was going to ask you about a personal favorite song of mine, an old one, *It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)*. I was wondering if, you know, that was the situation in the sixties that caused you to write that or if you could view that as your own personal philosophy on life?... I think that's a very strong song, when I listen to it.
BD: Well, I still do that song. It's still very relevant to me.
C19: Do you play it in concert?
BD: Yes, I do.
C19: Oh wow. I hope you come around soon to Detroit.
BD: Well, I hope I do and I hope you come.
C19: I'll be there, front row, me and all my friends. We're big fans of yours, Bob.
BC: That brings up a good point. How do you pick what you play live, out of thirty albums? Is it the closest to the heart, or new material? What do you do?
BD: Well, usually you just kind of go over the stuff that you can remember, you know, and then once in a while somebody will suggest something else, that, you know, sometime it

might be, you might have to go... I've had people in my bands actually say, let's do this song, and they've taught it back to me.

BC: Really! Interesting. Boy you really do remove yourself from it when time goes by, don't you?

BD: Well, you know, there's so many songs, sometimes on the old records we used to make – I hate to think of them as what you call filler songs – but sometimes you'd do a song, just write it in five or ten minutes and do it, and not think much more of it. But it sticks in your mind after, and it sticks in other peoples minds and you think well maybe we'll play it, you know.

BC: Yeah. Let's take a Canadian call. We'll talk to Rick. He's in Kitchener. Hi Rick.

C20: Hi. How are you Bob?

BD: I'm alright.

C20: I'd just like to say that *John Wesley Harding* was a great album by you and that if I didn't happen to hear that song *Frankie Lee and Judas Priest* I probably wouldn't be calling you right now. It's a super album. Now, there's one other question I'd like to ask... In 1980 when you played Massey Hall you did four concerts in a row and they were filming it every night. I was wondering is there any sort of documentary or anything coming up on that.

BD: Hm, well, they do a lot of filming at different shows sometimes. I don't remember that...

C20: Well, we were there for four nights and I've never seen you perform so great. It was just unbelievably super fantastic as they say. And I just want to thank you. I really appreciate all you've done for the last twenty years of music, for me and other people in general.

BD: Well, thank you for saying that.

BC: Thanks Rick we appreciate it. We're gonna play a song now that... and I'm glad that you mentioned this when we first met before the program tonight Bob, because *Blonde On Blonde* is, I guess, my favorite Bob Dylan album. Everybody's got their own favorite. You wanted us to play *Obviously Five Believers*. Why? Why do you still want us to play that song?

BD: I just like it.

BC: You just like that song; here it is.

Obviously Five Believers plays.

BC: Some pretty nasty blues harmonica there Bob Dylan. *Obviously Five Believers* from *Blonde On Blonde*.

BD: That's not me though...

BC: That's not you, though? Who is it?

BD: That's Charlie McCoy.

BC: Alright, good harmonica from McCoy there; the real McCoy. We'll take a brief time out and come back with Bob Dylan on *Rockline*... Now it's been quite a long time since there was a song on one of Bob's albums that just features Bob, his guitar, and his harmonica. There's one on this album *Empire Burlesque*, it's called *Dark Eyes* and we'll listen to it now.

Dark Eyes plays

BC: *Dark Eyes* is the name of that. I listen to the words that you write and it leaves me breathless. I know that you work hard on what you write, but does it come easy to you or do you really have to sit down and force yourself?

BD: That particular song just sort of came, well, I won't say easy, but it's all in one piece like that.

BC: Amazing. Let's talk to Mike. He's in Batesville. Mike, how are you tonight?

C21: Pretty good. Bob, you're the greatest. OK my question is – Why was Carla Olson of the Textones chosen for the video of *Sweetheart Like You* instead of Mark Knopfler who really played on it?

BD: Well, when we did the video it was impossible to get Mark to play because he was on tour.

BC: Oh, so that answers that. You just couldn't get him. Thanks for the call Mike. We'll talk to Carl now. We're about to run out of time, so I'm gonna move it up a little bit here. Carl's in Berlin, Connecticut. Carl, you're on.

C22: Thank you. Oh Bob I was just wondering, between your first and second album you seemed to go through a transition. Obvious, you got to write only two songs on your first album and then you wrote all of them on the second album, I believe. What was the story behind that?

BD: I don't think I was writing too many songs on the first album I did. If I did, I probably didn't think they were good enough to record. Then by the second one I think I'd been writing for a longer period of time.

BC: Thanks for the call Carl. We have time for one more. It's Michael in... California. Hi Michael.

C23: Howdy. Hi Bob. Er, what have your feelings been lately on your influence on other musicians?

BD: Well, you know, I don't have any feelings about it. It's nice to, to see that but... I don't know. You don't really think about it too much. I don't.

BC: A lot of other people do though, that's for sure. I want to say to everybody, thanks for the calls tonight. We really appreciate it. There's one thing that I want to say as we wrap up. first of all thanks for being here; it's been a real thrill and a real pleasure.

BD: Oh, it's been real nice to be here.

BC: Thank you for coming. Er, the way that I look at it, rock n' roll was really influenced by three people. Three people changed the way that rock was. That's Elvis Presley, the Beatles and Bob Dylan. Thank you for being here.

August-September 1985
Cameron Crowe Interview (for *Biograph*)

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 885-906.

Cameron Crowe's extensive series of interviews culminated in the production of the *Biograph* booklet which is reprinted below.

About the *Biograph* project, to quote Dylan,

> **"There's some stuff that hasn't been heard before, but most of my stuff has already been bootlegged, so to anybody in the know, there's nothing on it they haven't heard before... All it is, really, is repackaging, and it'll just cost a lot of money. About the only thing that makes it special is Cameron's book."**

The first glimpses of Bob Dylan come from friends and classmates in his hometown of Hibbing, Minnesota. Most of them had a frame of reference that didn't stretch much farther than the small, gray mid-western mining town where they lived. Young Dylan, born Robert Zimmerman on May 24th, 1941 looked mighty different around Hibbing. The explosive film *Blackboard Jungle* had touched his life and so had the late-night rhythm and blues stations from Chicago. When most of the other kids in Hibbing were still riding bicycles, Dylan was thinking about leather jackets and motorcycles. He hounded the local record store for the newest singles from Hank Williams, Hank Snow, Jimmy Reed, Chuck Berry, Howlin' Wolf. John Lee Hooker and others. Soon Dylan had formed his own bands, The Golden Chords, The Shadow Blasters, Elston Gunn & The Rock Boppers. When he took the stage for a high school talent show, fellow students were shocked at the slight kid who opened his mouth and came out wailing with a fully-realized Little Richard howl. He would not be long for Hibbing, Minnesota.

"My family settled in Hibbing I think in about '46 or '47. My father had polio when I was very young. There was a big epidemic. He lost his job in Duluth and we moved to the Iron Range and moved in with my grandmother Florence and my grandfather who was still alive at the time. We slept in the living room of my grandma's house for about a year or two, I slept on a roll-a-way bed, that's all I remember. Two of my uncles, my father's brothers, had gone to electrical school and by this time had gotten electrician licenses. They had moved from Duluth to up here where they operated out of a store called Micka Electric, wiring homes and things... my father never walked right again and suffered much pain his whole life. I never understood this until much later but it must have been hard for him because before that he'd been a very active and physical type guy. Anyway, the brothers took him in as a partner, my uncle Paul and my uncle Maurice, and this is where he worked for the rest of his life. Later, they bought the store and started selling lamps, clocks, radios anything electrical and then much later TV's and furniture. They still did wiring though and that was their main thing. I worked on the truck sometimes but it was never meant for me. This was not a rich or poor town, everybody had pretty much the same thing and the very wealthy people didn't live there, they were the ones that owned the mines and they lived thousands of miles away:"

"I always wanted to be a guitar player and a singer." Bob Dylan said recently on a break from sessions for a new album. **"Since I was ten, eleven or twelve, it was all that interested me. That was the only thing that I did that meant anything really. Henrietta was the first rock n' roll record I heard. Before that I'd listen to Hank Williams a lot. Before that, Johnny Ray. He was the first singer whose voice and style, I guess, I totally fell in love with. There was just something about the way he sang *When Your Sweetheart Sends A Letter*... that just knocked me out. I loved his style, wanted to dress like him too, that was real early though. I ran into**

him in the elevator in Sydney, Australia late in '78 and told him how he impressed me so when I was growing up... I still have a few of his records."

After high school graduation in 1959, Dylan traveled first to the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. He enrolled in classes at the University of Minnesota but ended spending more time in the nearby Bohemian district known as Dinkytown, where he played in a coffee house, The Ten O'Clock Scholar. Dylan was taken in by the artistic community and it was there that he first became acquainted in the rural folk-music of artists like Big Bill Broonzy, Leadbelly, Roscoe Holcomb, and the great Woody Guthrie. **"By that time, I was singing stuff like *Ruby Lee* by the Sunny Mountain Boys, and *Jack O'Diamonds* by Odetta and somehow because of my earlier rock n' roll background was unconsciously crossing the two styles. This made me different from your regular folk singers, who were either folk song purists or concert-hall singers, who just happened to be singing folk songs. I'd played by myself with just a guitar and harmonica or as part of a duo with Spider John Koerner, who played mostly ballads and Josh White type blues. He knew more songs than I did. *Whoa Boys Can't Ya Line 'M*, *John Hardy*, *Golden Vanity*, I learned all those from him. We sounded great, not unlike the Delmore Brothers. I could always hear my voice sounding better as a harmony singer. In New York, I worked off and on with Mark Spoelstra and later with Jim Kweskin. Jim and I sounded pretty similar to Cisco and Woody."**

"Minneapolis was the first big city I lived in if you want to call it that," remembered Dylan. **"I came out of the wilderness and just naturally fell in with the beat scene, the Bohemian, BeBop crowd, it was all pretty much connected... St. Louis, Kansas City, you usually went from town to town and found the same setup in all these places, people comin' and goin', nobody with any place special to live. You always ran into people you knew from the last place. I had already decided that society, as it was, was pretty phony and I didn't want to be part of that... also, there was a lot of unrest in the country. You could feel it, a lot of frustration, sort of like a calm before a hurricane, things were shaking up. Where I was at, people just passed through, really, carrying horns, guitars, suitcases, whatever, just like the stories you hear, free love, wine, poetry, nobody had any money anyway. There were a lot of poets and painters, drifters, scholarly types, experts at one thing or another who had dropped out of the regular nine-to-five life, there were a lot of house parties most of the time. They were usually in lofts or warehouses or something or sometimes in the park, in the alley wherever there was space. It was always crowded, no place to stand or breathe. There were always a lot of poems recited – '*Into the room people come and go talking of Michelangelo, measuring their lives in coffee spoons*'... 'What I'd like to know is what do you think of your blue-eyed boy now, Mr. Death. T.S. Eliot, e.e. cummings. It was sort of like that and it kind of woke me up... Suzie Rotolo, a girlfriend of mine in New York, later turned me on to all the French poets but for then it was Jack Kerouac, Ginsberg, Corso and Ferlinghetti – *Gasoline*, *Coney Island of the Mind*... oh man, it was wild – *I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness* that said more to me than any of the stuff I'd been raised on. *On The Road*, Dean Moriarty, this made perfect sense to me... anyway the whole scene was an unforgettable one, guys and girls some of whom reminded me of saints, some people had odd jobs – bus boy, bartender, exterminator, stuff like that but I don't think working was on most people's minds – just to make enough to eat, you know. Most of everybody, anyway, you had the feeling that they'd just been kicked out of something. It was outside, there was no formula, never was 'main stream' or 'the thing to do' in any sense. America was still very 'straight', 'post-war' and sort of into a gray-flannel suit thing, McCarthy, commies, puritanical, very claustrophobic and what ever was happening of any real value was happening away from that and sort of hidden from view and it would be years before the media would be able to recognise it, and choke-hold it and reduce it to silliness. Anyway, I got in at the tail-end of that and it was magic... everyday was like Sunday, it's like it was waiting for me, it had just as big an impact on me as Elvis Presley, Pound, Camus, T. S. Eliot, e. e. cummings, mostly expatriate Americans who**

were off in Paris and Tangiers. Burroughs, *Nova Express*, John Rechy, Gary Snyder, Ferlinghetti, *Pictures From The Gone World*, the newer poets and folk music, jazz, Monk, Coltrane, Sonny and Brownie, Big Bill Broonzy, Charlie Christian... it all left the rest of everything in the dust... I there knew I had to get to New York though, I'd been dreaming about that for a long time."

Dylan mapped out his strategy. Then performing as a solo guitarist and singer, he was playing at a St. Paul local coffee house and pizza parlor called The Purple Onion. The Purple Onion was located next to the main highway heading out of town. It was owned by Bill Danialson, who took a liking to Dylan and occasionally allowed him to sleep in the back room. It was a particularly heavy winter in the Midwest and Dylan's plan was to play at the club until the snow subsided enough for him to hitch-hike East. It never happened.

Recalled Dylan, **"I just got up one morning and left. I'd spent so much time thinking about it I couldn't think anymore. Snow or no snow, it was time for me to go. I made a lot of friends and I guess some enemies too, but I had to overlook it all. I'd learned as much as I could and used up all of my options. It all got real old real fast. When I arrived in Minneapolis it had seemed like a big city or a big town. When I left it was like some rural outpost that you see once from a passing train. I stood on the highway during a blizzard snowstorm believing in the mercy of the world and headed East, didn't have nothing but my guitar and suitcase. That was my whole world. The first ride I got, you know, was from some old guy in a jalopy, sort of a Bela Lugosi type, who carried me into Wisconsin. Of all the rides I've ever gotten it's the only one that stands out in my mind. People hitch-hiked a lot back then, they rode the bus or they stuck out their thumb and hitchhiked. It was real natural. I wouldn't do that today. People aren't as friendly and there's too many drugs on the road."**

It would be several months before Dylan actually arrived in New York. He stopped first in Madison, Wisconsin and fell in with the folk and blues community there. Then he moved on to Chicago, where he had some phone numbers to try and ended up staying there for a couple of months. Eventually Dylan got a ride to New York with a couple college kids. **"They needed two people to help drive to New York and that's how I left. Me and a guy named Fred Underhill went with them. Fred was from Williamstown or somewhere and he knew New York."**

Dylan and Underhill were dropped off on the New York side of the George Washington Bridge and immediately took a subway to Greenwich Village. It was the worst New York Winter in 60 years and the snow was knee-deep. **"Where I came from there was always plenty of snow so I was used to that,"** said Dylan, **"but going to New York was like going to the moon. You just didn't get on a plane and go there, you know. New York! Ed Sullivan, the New York Yankees, Broadway, Harlem... you might as well have been talking about China. It was some place which not too many people had ever gone, and anybody who did go never came back."**

The frail-looking Dylan was a voracious learner. Once in New York, he was at the center of all the action. It was chance to actually see and sometimes meet the artists he'd come to admire, including Woody Guthrie. Dylan listened to everybody and took it all in. **"I was lucky to meet Lonnie Johnson at the same club I was working and I must say he greatly influenced me. You can hear it in that first record, I mean *Corrina, Corrina*... that's pretty much Lonnie Johnson. I used to watch him every chance I got and sometimes he'd let me play with him. I think he and Tampa Red and of course Scrapper Blackwell, that's my favorite style of guitar playing... the harmonica part, well I'd always liked Wayne Raney and Jimmy Reed, Sonny Terry... 'Lil Junior Parker, *'told you baby, bam bam bam bam, once upon a time, bam bam bam bam, if I'd be yours, bam bam bam bam*** (foottap) ***li'l girl you'd be mine... but that's all right... I know you love some other man'*... but I couldn't get it in the rack like that or adjust the equipment to an**

amplified slow pace so I took to blowing out... actually Woody had done it... I had to do it that way to be heard on the street, you, now, above the noise... like an accordion... Victoria Spivey, too, oh man, I loved her... I learned so much from her I could never put into words," Dylan soon developed a style that would synthesise many different folk influences. At the time it was a bold move. Even the stodgiest standards sounded different Dylan's way. Some purists didn't appreciate the irreverence. **"I could sing *How High The Moon* or *If I Gave My Heart To You* and it would come out like *Mule-Skinner Blues*."**

"There was just a clique, you know," said Dylan, **"Folk music was a strict and rigid establishment. If you sang Southern Mountain Blues, you didn't sing Southern Mountain Ballads and you didn't sing City Blues. If you sang Texas Cowboy songs, you didn't play English ballads. It was really pathetic. You just didn't If you sang folk songs from the thirties, you didn't do bluegrass tunes or Appalachian Ballads. It was very strict. Everybody had their particular thing that they did. I didn't much ever pay attention to that. If I liked a song, I would just learn it and sing it the only way I could play it. Part of it was a technical problem which I never had the time nor the inclination for, if you want to call it a problem. But it didn't go down well with the tight-thinking people. You know, I'd hear things like 'I was in the Lincoln Brigade' and 'the kid is really bastardising up that song'. The other singers never seemed to mind, although. In fact, quite a few of them began to copy my attitude in guitar phrasing and such."**

Performing first at Village clubs like the Gas Light, The Commons, Café Rienzi and later Gerde's Folk City, Dylan had a quirky stage presence, equal parts humor and intensity. He also took several jobs as a guitarist or harmonica player. One session was a record date with noted folk artist Carolyn Hester. Rehearsing for the Hester session at the house of a friend, Dylan first met the distinguished Columbia Records producer and talent-scout John Hammond (Aretha Franklin, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday and later Bruce Springsteen). Hammond kept young Dylan in mind.

Dylan was soon to receive one of the most important reviews of his life, possibly the last one that meant as much. Noted *New York Times* folk critic Robert Shelton had raved about Dylan's shows at Gerde's Folk City, in an unprecedented review, for Dylan was merely the opening act and not the main headliner ("... there is no doubt he is bursting at the seams with talent") Nineteen year old Dylan read and re-read the review, showing it to friends and re-reading it again. By the next morning, Dylan was fresh and ready for his Hester session. The crinkled review was still in his hand. It was only the second time he's worked in a major studio, the first being a short stint on harmonica for a Harry Belafonte record earlier that summer. Hammond signed Dylan that afternoon.

"I couldn't believe it", said Dylan. **"I left there and I remember walking out of the studio. I was like on a cloud. It was up on 7th Avenue and when I left I was happening to be walking by a record store. It was one of the most thrilling moments in my life. I couldn't believe that I was staring at all the records in the window, Frankie Lane, Frank Sinatra, Patty Page, Mitch Miller, Tony Bennet and so on and so on. I, myself, would be among them in the window. I guess I was pretty naive, you know. It was even before I made a record, just knowing that I was going to make one and it was going to be in that window. I wanted to go in there dressed in the rags like I was and tell the owner, 'you don't know me now, but you will'. It never occurred to me that it could have been otherwise. I didn't know that just because you make a record it has to be displayed in a window next to Frank Sinatra, let alone they have to carry it in the store. John Hammond recorded me soon after that."**

Dylan's first album was recorded in a matter of hours. The session was over when they ran out of tape and Hammond estimated the entire cost at $402. These were, indeed, the good old

days. All of the material was recorded and it's important to note that Dylan would maintain that spirit of studio spontaneity for the next twenty years. Most of the music included in this collection was recorded in two or three takes.

"You didn't get a lot of studio time then," he said, **"Six months to make a record... It wasn't even conceivable. My early records, all the way up to the late seventies, were done in periods of hours. Days, maybe. Since the late sixties, maybe since Sgt Pepper on, everybody started to spend more of their time in the studio, actually making songs up and building them in the studio. I've done a little bit of that but I'd rather have some kind of song before I get there. It just seems to work out better that way."**

Much was made in subsequent years of the fact that Dylan had only one of his compositions (*Song To Woody*) on that album, **"I just took in what I had,"** he explained, **"I tried a bunch of stuff and John Hammond would say, 'Well, let's use this one' and I'd sing that one and he'd say. 'Let's use that one'. I must have played a whole lot of songs. He kept what he kept, you know. He didn't ask me what I wrote and what I didn't write. I was only doing a few of my own songs back then, anyway. You didn't really do too many of your own songs back then. And if you did... you'd just try to sneak them in. The first bunch of songs I wrote, I never would say I wrote them. It was just something you didn't do."**

The first album was released just before Dylan's 21st birthday, and it sold an unremarkable 5,000 copies. While the executives fretted over whether their "rising young star" was still a sound investment, Dylan was taking large steps in finding his songwriting voice. His live show strengthened and deepened as he added more of his own material. He was able to take an audience from laughter to thoughtful silence in a handful of sharply chosen words. Dylan's second album featured Dylan compositions and it was a success.

Along with the applause, remained the traditionalist doubters, as always. *Blowin' In The Wind*, first published in *Broadside Magazine* in 1962, did much to silence the opposition. It was an indisputably strong song, simple and timeless from the first listening. It would become the fastest selling single in Warner Brothers history in the hands of Peter, Paul and Mary, and the first to bring a new social awareness to the pop charts. To this day it's Dylan's most covered composition, from Bobby Darin' to Marlene Dietrich. When folk music found it's largest audience it was because of this song.

The songs that followed during this period stung and inspired and often took their stories directly from newspaper or word of mouth accounts. *The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll* was the actual story of a Baltimore maid mistakenly murdered by a drunken socialite. The socialite escaped with a six-month sentence. Dylan wrote of the brutal injustice with a masterful touch, never did it approach the heavy-handed. It was exactly this delicate quality that made Dylan's social commentary so original and his imitators so obvious.

"When I started writing those kinds of songs, there wasn't anybody doing things like that," said Dylan. **"Woody Guthrie had done similar things but he hadn't really done that type of song. Besides, I had learned from Woody Guthrie and knew and could sing anything he had done. But now the times had changed and things would be different. He contributed a lot to my style lyrically and dynamically but my musical background had been different, with rock n' roll and rhythm and blues playing a big part earlier on. Actually attitude had more to do with it than technical ability and that's what the folk movement lacked. In other words, I played all the folk songs with a rock 'n' roll attitude. This is what made me different and allowed me to cut through all the mess and be heard. People with no definition of feeling and that sort of thing, and there were too many of them... I remember when protest song writing was big, Phil Ochs came to town, Tim Hardin was around, Patrick Sky, Buffy St. Marie, but**

there never was any such thing. It was like the term 'Beatnik' or 'Hippie'. These were terms made up by magazine people who are invisible who like to put a label on something to cheapen it. Then it can be controlled better by other people who are also invisible. Nobody ever said, 'Well, here's another protest song I'm going to sing.'... Anyway, the guy who was best at that was Peter LaFarge. He was a champion rodeo cowboy and some time back he'd also been a boxer. He had a lot of his bones broken. I think he'd also been shot up in Korea. Anyway, he wrote *Ira Hayes*, *Iron Mountain*, *Johnny Half-Breed*, *White Girl* and about a hundred other things. There was one about Custer, 'the general he don't ride well anymore'. We were pretty tight for a while. We had the same girlfriend. Actually, Peter is one of the great unsung heros of the day. His style was just a little bit too erratic. But it wasn't his fault, he was always hurting and having to overcome it. Johnny Cash recorded a bunch of his songs. When I think of a guitar poet or protest singer, I always think of Peter, but he was a love song writer too."

His work made a subtle, if pointed shift with *Another Side of Bob Dylan*. **"Tom Wilson, the producer, titled it that,"** noted Dylan. **"I begged and pleaded with him not to do it. You know, I thought it was overstating the obvious. I knew I was going to have to take a lot of heat for a title like that and it was my feeling that it wasn't a good idea coming after *The Times They Are A- Changin'*, it just wasn't right. It seemed like a negation of the past which in no way was true. I know that Tom didn't mean it that way, but that's what I figured that people would take it to mean, but Tom meant well and he had control, so he had it his way. I guess in the long run, he might have been right to do what he did. It doesn't matter now."**

Wilson recalled at the time, "I didn't even particularly like folk music. I'd been recording Sun Ra and Coltrane and I thought folk music was for the dumb guys. This guy played like the dumb guys but then these words came out. I was flabbergasted. I said to Albert Grossman, who was there in the studio, I said, 'if you put some background to this, you might have a white Ray Charles with a message.' But it wasn't until a year later that everyone agreed that we should put a band behind him. I had to find a band. But it was a very gradual process." Wilson takes the credit for Dylan going electric. "It came from me."

The album, recorded in two nights, proved that Dylan was never simply a revolutionary or even a political singer in the conventional sense. These were songs about the politics of love. Throughout all the styles, periods and influences of his work, one of Dylan's only constants has been the love song. At composing them there are few as talented. He's approached the subject from all sides, from *It Ain't Me, Babe* and *To Ramona* to *Lay Lady Lay* and *Sweetheart Like You*.

So strong was Dylan's impact on the folk stages of America in the early sixties that when he chose to move back to his original high school roots in rock and roll, even to dress differently, there was an almost immediate uproar. For some time press conferences, articles and interviews were filled with pointed questions like, "Does it take a lot of trouble to get your hair like that?" "How do you feel about selling out?" and "How many folk singers are there now?" (Dylan's chain-smoking replies were, **"No, you just have to sleep on it for about twenty years"**, **"I don't feel guilt"**, and **"136"** respectively). Asked about his music, he said, **"It's mathematical... I use words like most people use numbers. That's about the best I can do."**

The songs were, as he once said, about objection, obsession or rejection. They had also begun to cry out for instrumentation. While touring England, Dylan had met and heard the new wave of English pop bands, from The Beatles to The Animals, The Pretty Things, Manfred Mann, The Stones, The Who. By January, Dylan was recording his breakthrough *Bringing It All Back Home* album. Half the album would feature a hard-edged rock and blues backing, the other half form-bending solo acoustic music. The Byrds own electrified hit version of *Mr. Tambourine Man*, taken from a Dylan demo tape, had become a single. Dylan was reaching a level of popularity

beyond even his own expectations. But there were still many folk purists in Dylan's audience and all signs were pointing to a showdown.

It would come in the Summer of 1965, at the Newport Folk Festival. Never one for complacency, Dylan had shown up at the folk music capital of the world in a black leather jacket, plugged in his Fender electric and began the prestigious Sunday night showcase performance (the bill included Pete Seeger, and Peter, Paul and Mary) with an earsplitting *Maggie's Farm*. Dylan, fresh from having recorded *Like A Rolling Stone*, blasted through the set with a vengeance. The reaction, by most accounts, was somewhat less than generous. The purists booed.

"I didn't really know what was going to happen," Dylan shrugged at a San Francisco press conference in December '65. **"They certainly booed, I'll tell you that. You could hear it all over the place. I don't know who they were... they've done it just about all over... I mean, they must be pretty rich to go some place and boo. I mean, I couldn't afford it if I was in their shoes."**

Typically, the controversy fuelled one of Dylan's most famous periods. At this point he was writing whole batches of songs in long, all-night sessions – in coffee houses, homes of friends, on napkins and tablecloths. Dylan was firing on all cylinders. The prolific artist was even coming in with songs he'd written on the way to the studio. Within minutes they became records with only one criteria – feel. A story from Al Kooper's fine book *Backstage Passes* helps recall the atmosphere. Then-guitarist Kooper, an early Dylan fan, had wandered into the empty studio where a session was due to begin. He asked producer Tom Wilson for a spot in the band and Wilson advised Kooper to be there, guitar in hand, when Dylan arrived. Dylan soon appeared with guitarist Michael Bloomfield in tow and Kooper was casually switched to organ. Kooper did not play organ, but the musician kept quiet and improvised when Dylan counted off his newest song, *Like A Rolling Stone*. After the take, Wilson objected to the organ playing. Dylan asked that it be turned up. The next take, released five days later, bumped off The Beatles *Help* to become Dylan's first number-one single. At almost six minutes, it was then the longest hit in history.

Country artist Johnny Tillotson stopped Dylan in the street to tell him *Like A Rolling Stone* had gone to number one. Dylan was amazed. It was less than five years from the day he'd stared in the window of the record store on 7th Avenue and the weight of that fact didn't escape him.

Perhaps only Elvis Presley before him had been able to stir up public emotions and at the same time redefine popular music. Before Dylan, Chuck Berry had been one of the only popular artists to sing his own songs. After Dylan, singer-songwriters were no longer akin to ambidexterity – interesting, but not necessary. **"I didn't know it at the time but all the radio songs were written in Tin-Pan-Alley, the Brill Building,"** Dylan recalled. **"They had stables of songwriters up there that provided songs for artists. I heard of it but not paid much attention. They were good song writers but the world they knew and the world I knew were totally different. Most of all the songs, though, being recorded came from there, I guess because most singers didn't write there own. They didn't even think about it Anyway, Tin-Pan-Alley is gone. I put an end to it. People can record their own songs now. They're almost expected to do it. The funny thing about it though is that I didn't start out as a songwriter, I just drifted into it. Those other people had it down to a science."**

Dylan's concerts in the mid sixties grew to be strange and mysterious affairs. With Mike Bloomfield off touring as part of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band. Dylan had settled on a new band featuring drummer Levon Helm and a stunning new blues-and-rock guitarist, Jamie (Robbie) Robertson. (Called Levon and The Hawks, the group would years later rename

themselves and go on to their own success as The Band). Dylan himself was exploring the inner-limits of his songwriting ability and the outer limits of his stage presence. The result was an amazing series of performances in 1965 and 1966.

Dylan onstage and the tumultuous '66 tour of the British Isles are well documented in this collection. Following wrestlers and carnivals into halls where rock had never been before (or since), every stop was another drama. Another show on the same tour was released in underground circles as *The Royal Albert Hall Concert* and it's still a cherished recording. The show actually took place in Manchester but an amazing bit of audience-and-artist dialogue (Audience member: "Judas!" Dylan: **"I don't believe you... you're a liar."**) was taken from the Albert Hall concert days later. These concerts with Bob Dylan and The Band are now thought to be highlights in rock history but they booed at the time.

Remembers Robbie Robertson today, "That tour was a very strange process. You can hear the violence, and the dynamics of the music. We'd go from town to town, from country to country and it was like a job. We set up, we played, they booed and threw things at us. Then we went to the next town, played, they booed, threw things, and we left again. I remember thinking, 'This is a strange way to make a buck.'"

"I give tremendous credit to Bob in that *everybody* at the time said, 'Get rid of these guys they're terrible': They said it behind our backs, and they said it with the group standing right there. Dylan never did anything about it. He never once came to me and said, 'Robbie, this is not working...' The only reason tapes of those shows exist today is because we wanted to know, 'Are we crazy?' We'd go back to the hotel room, listen to a tape of the show and think, 'Shit. That's not bad. Why is everybody so upset?'"

(It's an interesting footnote to music history that along an early English tour, Dylan would visit the home of John Lennon and the two would pen a song together. **"I don't remember what it was, though,"** said Dylan. **"We played some stuff into a tape recorder but I don't know what happened to it. I can remember playing it and the recorder was on. I don't remember anything about the song."**)

Lennon would later comment on their relationship. "I've grown up enough to communicate with him... Both of us were always uptight, you know, and of course I wouldn't know whether he was uptight because I was so uptight, and then when he wasn't uptight, I was -all that bit. But we just sat it out because we just liked being together."

Back in the States, Dylan had reached household name status. Not only was he an unlikely hit-singles artist, Bob Dylan was now a culture hero and a conversation piece. He was a genius. He was a sellout. He was a poet, he wasn't a poet. He was straight. He had to be on something. It's conceivable that the artist himself never scheduled a moment to reflect on all the commotion. He continued writing and touring, even while recording *Blonde on Blonde* in Nashville. It has remained as one of the most artful albums in modern music, and one that came closest to Dylan's truest musical intentions. He told Ron Rosenbaum in a '78 *Playboy* interview, **"It's that thin, that wild mercury sound. It's metallic and bright gold, with whatever that conjures up. That's my sound. I haven't been able to succeed in getting it all the time."**

Those present for the *Blonde on Blonde* sessions remember it as an unlikely setting for greatness. Compared to the circus-quality of the live shows, this was a twilight zone of complacency. While struggling songwriter and then-janitor Kris Kristofferson cleaned the ashtrays, Dylan recorded with a band that was made up of traditional Nashville studio musicians and several New York favorites like Robertson and Kooper. "Blonde on Blonde was very different from what we were doing out on the road," said Robertson. "This was a very

controlled atmosphere. I remember the Nashville studio musicians playing a lot of card games. Dylan would finish a song, we would cut the song and then they'd go back to cards. They basically did their routine, and it sounded beautiful. Some songs pushed it somewhere else, like Obviously Five Believers where we had four screaming guitar solos."

"The sessions happened late at night," recalled Kooper. "The afternoons were mostly for songwriting." Dylan sometimes worked on his hotel piano, other times at a studio typewriter. Songs like *Visions Of Johanna* (original title: *Seems Like A Freeze-Out*) and *Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands* would make it to acetate stage and Dylan would often take the discs with him on the road to play for others. **"How does this sound to you?"** he would ask. **"Have you ever heard anything like this before?"** Usually they hadn't.

Dylan's singing – once the quality Woody Guthrie liked best about him – had also gotten more expressive. Part rocker, part wounded romantic, part cynic and part believer, he had learned to make records now, and the rush was felt on radios all over the world. *Like A Rolling Stone*, *Positively 4th Street* and *I Want You* were classic singles as well as songs. John Lennon said in a *Rolling Stone* interview in 1970, "You don't have to hear what Bob Dylan's saying, you just have to hear the way he says it."

More than a few artists, from Bruce Springsteen to David Bowie, have been saddled with the phrase "the new Bob Dylan" at one time or another in their careers. But for Dylan himself, there weren't many examples to look at. As his momentum doubled and redoubled, the still somewhat frail Dylan charged forward. He amped and pushed himself to the limits of personal stamina. He worked constantly, rarely ate, rarely stopped. Like James Dean before him, Dylan left behind a wake of peers who stood in awe of his talent and in fear for his safety and health.

Late in July of 1966, their worst fears nearly came true. While joyriding in Woodstock, the back wheel locked on Dylans Triumph 500. He was thrown from the seat and drilled into the pavement, suffering a concussion, a number of facial cuts and several broken vertebrae in his neck. It could have been much worse. Amid macabre Deanish reports that he was either dead, paralyzed, cryogenically frozen or retired, Dylan quietly recuperated for several months. It was much-needed time to regroup but long after the wounds healed, he would still be working to regain his personal equilibrium.

While Dylan laid low at his then-home in upstate New York, The Band was recording at the nearby basement tape studio they had dubbed Big Pink. Dylan was writing a wide range of new songs and the idea was to record them at a leisurely pace, possibly as demos for other artists. The sessions stretched through several months of the down-time, and over the period Dylan and The Band recorded a large group of songs that ran from the seminal *I Shall Be Released* to the jaunty story-telling of *Million Dollar Bash*, to a number of songs too bawdy to even record. There new characters, new rhythms... and when what Robertson called "a tape of a tape of a tape of a dub of a tape" slipped out, the world soon had it's first bootleg album. This, of course, didn't much please the victims of the theft. Even though the mood of *The Basement Tapes*, as they were called, was forbidden and exciting, (Neil Young for years kept a mastertape copy and played it during the breaks in his own sessions often) the songs stayed on the shelf until 1975.

"The bootleg records," Dylan commented, **"those are outrageous. I mean, they have stuff you do in a phone booth. Like, nobody's around. If you're just sitting and strumming in a motel, you don't think anybody's there, you know... it's like the phone is tapped... and then it appears on a bootleg record. With a cover that's got a picture of you that was taken from underneath your bed and it's got a striptease type title and it cost $30. Amazing. Then you wonder why most artists feel so paranoid."**

It would be a while before Dylan officially re-emerged on record with a quietly thoughtful Nashville album called *John Wesley Harding*. In his recuperation period, he had watched his own influence take rock in an explosive new direction. Rock was more topical and meaningful, the form had been stretched and now studio techniques were changing too. The Beatles released *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, The Rolling Stones answered with *Satanic Majesties* and now the pop world was waiting on Dylan. Dylan was waiting on Dylan, too. Did he feel confident about meeting the challenge?

"Not really," he smiled, **"I didn't know the studio like those guys did. They had obviously spent a lot of hours in the studio figuring that stuff out and I hadn't. And not only hadn't I, but I didn't really care to and I'd lost my** (studio) **contacts at that point. I'd been out of commission for a while. All I had were those songs that I'd just sort of scribbled down."**

"We recorded that album, and I didn't know what to make of it. Lots of times people will get excited and they say, 'this is great, this is fantastic.' But usually they're full of shit. They're just trying to tell you something to make you feel good. People have a way of telling you what they think you want to hear – anytime I don't know something and I ask somebody, I usually know less about it after I ask than before. You've got to know or you don't know and I really didn't know about that album at all. So I figured the best thing to do would be to put it out as quickly as possible, call it *John Wesley Harding* because that was one song that I had no idea what it was about, why it was even on the album. I figured I'd call the album that, call attention to it, make it something special... the spelling on that album, I just thought that was the way he spelled his name. I asked Columbia to release it with no publicity and no hype because this was the season of hype. And my feeling was that if they put it out with no hype, there was enough interest in the album anyway, people would go out and get it. And if you hyped it, there was always that possibility that it would piss people off. They didn't spend any money advertising the album and the album just really took off. People have made a lot out of it, as if it was some sort of ink blot test or something. But it never was intended to be anything else but just a bunch of songs, really, maybe it was better 'n I thought."

Nashville Skyline continued Dylan's string of albums recorded at the CBS studio in the country music capital of the world. His voice, sweetened by a brief break from cigarettes, Dylan produced one of his biggest single hits in April of 1969. Written for the movie *Midnight Cowboy*, *Lay Lady Lay* missed the deadline for inclusion on the soundtrack. The producers used Fred Neil's *Everybody's Talkin'* instead. Dylan released *Lay Lady Lay* himself and it is that love song that became one of his longest lasting hits. **"I don't know what made me sound that way. Today I don't think I could sound that way if I wanted to. Clive Davis really wanted to release that song as a single. Actually I was slightly embarrassed by it, wasn't even sure I even liked the song. He said it was a smash hit... I thought he was crazy. I was really astonished, you know, when he turned out to be right."**

Dylan's next release was 1970's *Self Portrait*, a double album of standards and several live tracks from his concert at the Isle of Wight. Criticized as trivial at the time, now revered by critics looking for an argument, the album seemed to make a simple statement – he enjoyed singing other people's material – but it also further signaled that Bob Dylan had no responsibility toward the vocal few who still demanded to know why he stopped writing "protest songs." One man, A. J. Weberman, had even become famous for going through Dylan's garbage for "clues".

"Self Portrait," Dylan explained recently, **"was a bunch of tracks that we'd done all the time I'd gone to Nashville. We did that stuff to get a (studio) sound. To open up we'd do two or three songs, just to get things right and then we'd go on and do what we were going to do. And then there was a lot of other stuff that was just on the shelf. But I was being bootlegged**

at the time and a lot of stuff that was worse was appearing on bootleg records. So I just figured I'd put all this stuff together and put it out, my own bootleg record, so to speak. You know, if it actually had been a bootleg record, people probably would have sneaked around to buy it and played it for each other secretly. Also I wasn't going to be anybody's puppet and I figured this record would put an end to that... I was just so fed up with all that who people thought I was nonsense."

It would be his last work of the sixties, a decade that Dylan had largely spent in a spin-cycle of touring and recording. He had become a part of everybody else's sixties experience but did he feel like he'd had one of his own?

"I never looked at it that way," answered Dylan. **"I didn't even consider it being the sixties. People who were in it, it never occurred to anybody that we were living in the sixties. It was too much like a pressure cooker. There wasn't any time to sit around and think about it. Not like what we're living now is the eighties where everybody says, 'These are the eighties and ain't it great.' In the sixties they didn't say that. Nobody wanted to say that. There were a lot of people who jumped on the bandwagon who didn't know it existed before. As far as I know, they're the only ones who made a big deal about it. People like to think of themselves as being important when they write about things that are important. But for people who were active, it didn't matter. It could have been the twenties. Nobody really figured it out until the late sixties that something happened. I remember Joe Strummer said that when he first heard my records, I'd already been there and gone. And in a way that's kind of true. It was like a flying saucer landed... that's what the sixties were like. Everybody heard about it but only a few really saw it."**

Dylan soon released *New Morning*, a confident album of originals. It was another critically heralded return for a man who'd never really left. He'd simply learned to work at his own pace, a pace that tended not to interfere with the raising of his family.

Dylan spent the next few years in New York, popping up only occasionally with performances like Concert for Bangladesh or a single like *Watching The River Flow* or *George Jackson*. In 1973, Kris Kristofferson talked Dylan into joining him on the Durango, Mexico set of the late Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*. Dylan ended up not only scoring the movie, but turning in a clever performance as Alias, sidekick to Billy the Kid. *Knockin' On Heaven's Door*, one of Dylan's most successful singles was released from the soundtrack album. The film featured Peckinpah's trademark violent and unpolished beauty, and the music fit it perfectly. The project seemed to signal a new period of activity. "I think he's getting ready for something," said co-star Kris Kristofferson at the time. "He sat down at the piano the other night. He had that look in his eyes...". Said Dylan, **"actually, I was just one of Peckinpah's pawns. There wasn't a part for me and Sam just liked me around. I moved with my family to Durango for about three months. Rudy Wurlitzer, who was writing this thing, invented a part for me but there wasn't any dimension to it and I was very uncomfortable in this non-role. But then time started to slip away and there I was trapped deep in the heart of Mexico with some madman, ordering people around like a little king. You had to play the dummy all day. I used to think to myself, 'Well now, how would Dustin Hoffman play this?' That's why I wore glasses in that reading part. I saw him do it in *Papillon*. It was crazy, all these generals making you jump into hot ants, setting up turkey shoots and whatever, and drinking tequila 'til they passed out. Sam was a wonderful guy though. He was an outlaw. A real hombre. Somebody from the old school. Men like they don't make anymore. I could see why actors would do anything for him. At night when it was quiet, I would listen to the bells. It was a strange feeling, watching how this movie was made and I know it was wide and big and breathless, at least what was in Sam's mind, but it didn't come out that way. Sam himself just didn't have final control and that was the problem. I saw it in a movie house one cut away from his and I**

could tell that it had been chopped to pieces. Someone other than Sam had taken a knife to some valuable scenes that were in it. The music seemed to be scattered and used in every other place but the scenes in which we did it for. Except for *Heaven's Door*, I can't say as though I recognized anything I'd done for being in the place that I'd done it for. Why did I do it, I guess I had a fondness for Billy the Kid. In no way can I say I did it for the money. Anyway, I was too beat to take it personal. I mean, it didn't hurt but I was sleep walking most of the time and had no real reason to be there. I'd gotten my family out of New York, that was the important thing, there was a lot of pressure back there. But even so my wife got fed up almost immediately. She'd say to me, 'What the hell are we doing here?' It was not an easy question to answer."

Much in music had changed over the previous few years. Bob Dylan could now look around to see a world of rock megatours, chartered 747's, mega-platinum artists, rockers on the cover of world news magazines and more. Dylan, who first left Minnesota at a time when rock and roll was still a forbidden entity, was about to venture back at a time when it had become the biggest business.

In 1974 he reunited with The Band and began recording a batch of new songs in Los Angeles. First titled *Ceremonies of the Horseman* and later re-titled *Planet Waves*, the album (and the first single, *On A Night Like This*) set the tone for a high-spirited return. Dylan's first coast-to-coast US tour was announced. The seats sold out in hours but the event brought on board a number of new questions. What would Dylan be like? Could he match the intensity of his early days in huge arenas? Would he mean as much?

The questions were dispensed with in short order. Dylan appeared at full strength, with an adrenalin charged voice and powerful backing from The Band. The concerts were cheered like victory parties. Remembers Robbie Robertson, "We were hoping to do an extremely different kind of show. But we rehearsed and eventually settled on a show that wasn't dissimilar from our last tours (in '65-'66). But this time when we played, everybody loved us. I don't know if we needed it but it was a kind of a relief."

All the while, Dylan had some problems with myth-making proportions of the tour. **"I think I was just playing a role on that tour,"** he said. **"I was playing Bob Dylan and the Band was playing The Band. It was all sort of mindless. The people that came out to see us came mostly to see what they missed the first time around. It was just more of a 'legendary' kind of thing. They've heard about it, they'd bought the records, whatever, but what they saw didn't give any clue to what was. What got it to that level wasn't what they saw. What they saw you could compare to early Elvis and later Elvis, really. Because it wasn't quite the same, when we needed that acceptance it wasn't there. By this time it didn't matter. Time had proven them all wrong. We were cleaning up but it was an emotionless trip."**

"Rock-and-roll had become a highly extravagant enterprise. T-shirts, concert booklets, lighting shows, costume changes, glitter and glamour... it was just a big show, a big circus except there weren't any elephants, nothing really exceptional just Sound and Lights, Sound and Lights, and more Sound and Lights. That's what it had become and that's what it still is. It is like those guys who watched the H bomb explode on Bikini Island and then turn to each other and say, 'Beautiful, man, just incredibly beautiful.' That's what this whole scene had become. The only thing people talked about was energy this, energy that. The highest compliments were things like, 'Wow, lotta energy, man.' It had become absurd. The bigger and louder something was, the more energy it was supposed to have. You know, like knock me out, drive me to the wall, kick my brains in, blow me up, whip me 'til it hurts, that's what people were accepting as heavy energy. Actually it was just big industry moving in on the music. Like the armaments manufacturers selling weapons to both sides in a war, inventing

bigger and better things to take your head off while behind your back, there's a few people laughing and getting rich off your vanity. Have you ever seen a slaughter-house where they bring in a herd of cattle? They round them all up, put them all in one area, pacify 'm and slaughter them... big business, brings in lots of bucks, heavy energy. It always reminds me of that. The greatest praise we got on that tour was 'incredible energy, man', it would make me want to puke. The scene had changed somewhat when we stepped into that picture. We were expected to produce a show that lived up to everybody's expectations. And we did it. It was utterly profound."

"What they saw wasn't really what they would have seen in '66 or '65. If they had seen that, that was much more demanding. That was a much more demanding show. People didn't know what it was at that point. When people don't know what something is, they don't understand it and they start to get, you know, weird and defensive. Nothing is predictable and you're always out on the edge. Anything can happen. I always had those songs though and so I always figured everything was alright."

When the tour was over-commemorated by a cover in *Newsweek*, the same magazine that once questioned his authorship of *Blowin' In The Wind*, Dylan responded in surprising style. Just as he had cultivated his most public performing style yet, he reversed himself, contacted several acoustic musicians and told his label he was going to record some "private songs." He wanted to do them quickly, in a small way.

He began recording what is often recognised as his finest album of the seventies, *Blood On The Tracks*. Reportedly inspired by the breakup of his marriage, the album derived more of it's style from Dylan's renewed interest in painting. The songs cut deep and their sense of perspective and reality was always changing. This was acoustic soul music and clearly not the work of an artist intent on staying in arenas touring on the strength of his own myth.

"I'm not concerned with the myth," Dylan said in a 1977 interview, **"because I can't work under the myth. The myth can't write the songs. It's the blood behind the myth that creates the art. The myth doesn't exist for me like it may for other people. I'd rather go on, above the myth."**

After *Blood On The Tracks*, Dylan stayed in New York. He recorded one of his most successful albums, *Desire*, with a new group of musicians led by Scarlet Rivera. Dylan had seen her playing on a street comer and invited her to join the band. Her violin helped characterize *Hurricane*, the unreleased *Abandoned Love* and many other songs from this period.

Dylan also began popping up, in clubs around Greenwich Village, on some of the same stages where he started out. More than a few visitors in the Village, accustomed to seeing the early photos of a long-gone Dylan still pasted in the windows, did a triple take when they actually saw Dylan back again on stage. Slowly, those club performances grew to include others like Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Joan Baez, T-Bone Burnett, Roger McGuinn, Mick Ronson and others. Those shows built into the Rolling Thunder Revue, a bicentennial tour of small to mid-size halls that was documented in a TV special, a number of books and later in Dylan's own film Renaldo and Clara. In what was now Dylan's third or fourth wave of popularity, even candidate Jimmy Carter was campaigning for president with a speech that quoted Bob Dylan.

By the time of *Renaldo and Clara's* release, Dylan was already past it. He had relocated to a converted rehearsal hall in Santa Monica, California and was rehearsing musicians for a band he could both tour and record with. The resulting eleven piece group was one of his biggest and most precise. They toured the world in 1978 and also recorded the underrated *Street Legal* album. The sound of this period was something close to the dense precision of *Blonde on*

Blonde, with a measure of gospel-blues added. *Street Legal* defined Dylan's work for the next several years. Said Dylan, **"The critics treated this record spitefully... I saw one review that accused me of going 'Vegas' and copying Bruce Springsteen because I was using Steve Douglas, a saxophone player... the Vegas comparison was, well you know, I don't think the guy had ever been to Vegas and the saxophone thing was almost slanderous... I mean I don't copy guys that are under fifty years old and though I wasn't that familiar with Bruce's work, his saxophone player couldn't be spoken of in the same breath as Steve Douglas who'd played with Duane Eddy and on literally all of Phil Spector's records... I mean no offense to Clarence or anything but he's not in the same category and the guy who reviewed my stuff should have known it... anyway people need to be encouraged, not stepped on and put in a straight jacket."**

After his world tour, reports would soon circulate that Dylan had become a born-again Christian. The next album told the bigger story. Dylan was inspired with religious thought but he'd also struck a smoldering studio groove with celebrated rhythm and blues producers Jerry Wexler and Barry Beckett. This partnership produced one of the most finely recorded albums of Dylan's recording career. *Slow Train Coming* was both a critically praised and successful work. Dylan received his first Grammy and the album went platinum. It also won the Dove Award for Inspirational Album of 1979. The follow-up album *Saved*, with it's Biblical inscription on the outer sleeve, fared less well. Religious themes have had a place in his music from the beginning, but for a time the media searched these songs for clues to his commitment. Although the messages might have been too much for pop music mentality, the meaning behind the songs did not fall entirely upon all deaf ears. "Yes mon," said Bob Marley,... "that is a good verse too, a revelation, a link-up with a Rasta, as Haile Selassie is the Conquering Lion of the house of Judah. And me like his song *Serve Somebody* quite a bit as well... I glad him do it, too, y'know, because there comes a time when an artist just cannot follow the crowd. If you are an artist like Bob Dylan, you got to make the crowd follow you. I can tell you that it doesn't mean anything to him that people might not like what he is doing. Him still do it. And that is the most important thing. Him still do it."

Shot of Love, a somewhat more secular LP recorded in Los Angeles, was produced by Dylan and Chuck Plotkin (with the help of Bumps Blackwell on *Shot of Love*).

The range of influence was wider, the music was technically improved from earlier days but the feel could have been 1966. This was raw Dylan, live in the studio, scrambling to get to the heart of his new songs. **"People didn't listen to that album in a realistic way. First of all, *Shot of Love* was one of the last songs Bumps Blackwell produced and even though he only produced one song I gotta say that of all the producers I ever used, he was the best, the most knowledgeable and he had the best instincts... I would have liked him to do the whole thing but things got screwed up and he wasn't so called 'contemporary'... what came out was something close to what would have come out if he was really there... also Clydie King and I sound pretty close to what's all the best of every traditional style so how could anybody complain about that... and the record had something that, I don't know, could have been made in the '40's or maybe the '50's... there was a cross element of songs on it... the critics, I hate to keep talking about them, wouldn't allow the people to make up their own minds... all they talked about was Jesus this and Jesus that, like it was some kind of Methodist record. I don't know what was happening, maybe Boy George or something but *Shot of Love* didn't fit into the current formula. It probably never will. Anyway people were always looking for some excuse to write me off and this was as good as any... I can't say if being 'non commercial' is a put down or a compliment."** The next album, *Infidels*, was a critical and artistic success that also ushered Dylan into the video age with *Sweetheart Like You* and *Jokerman*.

"I don't feel like I know what I'm going to do even next week, or not do." Dylan said of the future. **"Mostly I just write songs, make records, and do tours, that takes up most of my time, so I just expect it to go on that way. I started a book awhile back called *Ho Chi Minh in Harlem*. I'd probably like to finish that. Maybe write some stories the way Kerouac did, about some of the people I know and knew, change the names – New developments, new ideas? I guess I'd like to do a concept album like, you know, *Red Headed Stranger* or something, maybe a children's album, or an album of cover songs but I don't know if the people would let me get away with that ... *A Million Miles From Nowhere*, *I Who Have Nothing*, *All My Tomorrows*, *I'm In The Mood For Love*, *More Than You Know*, *It's A Sin To Tell A Lie*... I guess someday I'd like to do an album of standards, also, maybe instrumentals, guitar melodies with percussion, people don't know I can do that sort of thing. I can get away with a lot more in a show than I can on record... I mean I'm aware of sythesisers and drum machines but they don't affect my stuff to any great degree. There's a great temptation to see how false you can be. I can see where pretty soon the human voice will be synthesised, become totally unreal. You know, like put in Paul Anka and get him sounding like Howlin' Wolf or vice versa. I guess it don't matter but it's irritating, it's a cheap substitution for reality, stimulating little boys and little girls with sex in a bottle, it's all got the soul of a robot, your mind thinks its true but your heart knows it's wrong. Too much chaos on the airways for the senses to take, assault on the all too fragile imagination as it is... fill up everything, put in every color, clog it all up... if you wanna make things clear, you've got to leave other things out... like that's why the old black and white movies look better than color movies, they give your eye and your imagination something to do, well, that's one of the reasons, same thing with the old music and the new music... probably too much progress or something, I don't know."**

While Dylan had often deflected artistic inquiries in the past, on this day he was almost earnest in his observations. Bob Dylan's perspective in the mid eighties is a valuable one, one he seemed inspired to have gained.

"No, I really don't have a plan. You know what I mean, if you've heard my records and know what was going on at the time I turned them out. A lot of the styles and lyrical dynamics that I use I feel I have invented myself or stumbled into accidentally. Either back in the sixties or even in the late seventies or eighties using certain combinations that have never come up before, so I work mostly in that area. I can't stop doing it just because a whole lot of other people have taken certain elements of it and used it for their own thing. I mean Muddy Waters didn't stop playing just because the J. Geils Band started making records. I noticed that George Jones didn't roll over just because Merle Haggard appeared. It's actually quite complimentary to witness your own influence in someone else's success. But I don't know, I guess it can be taken the other way too... look at what happened to Lefty Frizzell. Link Wray invented heavy metal music but who knows it? T-Bone Walker is really the essence of city blues, can wipe B. B. Jones off the map but who can tell you that? Isn't Bessie Smith rock n' roll? People forget. You have to know there's always someone else that's gonna come along after you. There's always going to be a faster, bigger and younger gun, right? Pop music on the radio? I don't know. I listen mostly to Preacher stations and the country music stations and maybe the oldies stations... that's about it. At the moment I like Judy Rodman, *I've Been Had By Love Before*, more than anything happening on the pop stations. I don't think of myself really as a pop singer anyway, so what do I know."

For a man often credited with helping to define rock, Dylan was careful to point out that he was never owned by it.

"The thing about rock n' roll is that for me anyway it wasn't enough, *Tutti Frutti* and *Blue Suede Shoes* were great catch phrases and driving pulse rhythms and you could get high on the energy but they weren't serious or didn't reflect life in a realistic way. I knew that when I

got into folk music, it was more of a serious type of thing. The songs are filled with more despair, more sadness, more triumph, more faith in the supernatural, much deeper feelings... *My Bonnie Love Is Lang A Growing, Go Down Ye Bloody Red Roses* even *Jesse James* or *Down By The Willow Garden*, definitely not pussy stuff. There is more real life in one line than there was in all the rock n' roll themes. I needed that. Life is full of complexities and rock n' roll didn't reflect that. It was just put on a happy face and ride sally ride, there was nothing even resembling *Sixteen Snow White Horses* or *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean* in even the vaguest way. If I did anything, I brought one to the other. There was nothing serious happening in music when I started, not even the Beatles. They were singing *Love Me Do* and Marvin Gaye... he didn't do *What's Going On* until the '70s."

What did he think of the new music?

"Nothing is new. Everybody just gets their chance – most of it just sounds recycled and shuffled around, watered down. Even rap records. I love that stuff but it's not new, you used to hear that stuff all the time... there was this one guy, Big Brown, he wore a jail blanket, that's all he ever used to wear, summer and winter. John Hammond would remember him too – he was like *Othello*, he'd recite epics like some grand Roman orator, really backwater stuff though, *Stagger Lee*, *Cocaine Smitty*, *Hattiesburg Hattie*. Where were the record companies when he was around? Even him though, it's like it was done 30 years before that... and God knows when else. I think of *Luke the Drifter* as rap records and as far as concept and intelligence and warring with words, Mighty Sparrow was and probably still is king. You go see him and in the audience there's people just standing up and arguing away with him about every kind of thing... politics, sex, outer space, whatever, he answers 'm all back, never breaks stride, all in his poetry, his shows are like prize fights and he always come out on top, all this and a fifteen or twenty piece band just blasting away ... Calypso King... Mighty Sparrow... he's fantastic. Rock n' roll, I don't know, rhythm and blues or whatever, I think it's gone. In its pure form. There are some guys true to it but it's so hard. You have to be so dedicated and committed and everything is against it. I'd like to see Charlie Sexton become a big star, but the whole machine would have to break down right now before that would happen. It was easier before. Now it's just rock, capital R, no roll, the roll's gone, homosexual rock, working man's rock, stock-broker rock, it's now a highly visible enterprise, big establishment thing. You know thing's go better with Coke because Aretha Franklin told you so and Maxwell House coffee must be OK because Ray Charles is singing about it. Everybody's singing about ketchup or headache medicine or something. In the beginning it wasn't anything like that, had nothing to do with pantyhose and perfume and barbecue sauce... you were eligible to get busted for playing it. It's like Lyndon Johnson saying '*We shall overcome*' to a nation-wide audience, ridiculous... there's an old saying, '*If you want to defeat your enemy, sing his song*' and that's pretty much still true. I think it's happened and nobody knows the difference. In the old days, there's that phrase again, you paid the price to play. You could get run out of town or pushed over a cliff. Of course there was always someone there with a net. I'm not trying to paint just one side of a picture. But, you know, it was tough getting heard, it was radical. You felt like you were part of some circus side-show. Now it's the main event. You can even go to college and study rock and roll, they turn out professors who grade your records. There's enough dribble, magazine articles, proclamations, declarations, whatever, written about it to keep you guessing for a lifetime but it's not in reading and writing about it, it's in doing it... the best stuff was done without the spotlight before the commentaries and what not... when they came to define it I think they killed something very important about it. The corporate world, when they figured out what it was and how to use it they snuffed the breath out of it and killed it. What do they care? Anything that's in the way, they run over like a bulldozer, once they understood it they killed it and made it a thing of the past, put up a monument to it and now that's what you're hearing, the headstone, it's a billion dollar business. I don't know, I guess it's hard to find flaws with this. Used to be they were very

much afraid, you know, like hide your daughters, that sort of thing... Elvis, Little Richard, Chuck Berry... they all struck fear into the heart. Now they got a purpose sort of... to sell soap, blue jeans, anything, it's become country club music... White House... Kentucky Fried Chicken... it's all been neutralised... nothing threatening, nothing magical... nothing challenging. For me I hate to see it because it set me free, set the whole world on fire, there's a lot of us who still can remember, who've been there. What I'm telling is no lie but then again who wants to hear it? You just get yourself worked up over nothing."

Dylan considered the thought.

"The truth about anything in this society, as you know, is too threatening. Gossip is King. It's like 'conscience' is a dirty word. Whatever is truthful haunts you and don't let you sleep at night. Especially anybody who's living a lie gets hurt. You get a lot of ugly reactions from people not familiar with it. A lot of times you don't even bother. Not that I'm an expert or anything but I've always tried to stick that into my music in some kind of way or at least not to leave it untouched. The old stuff stayed in your head long after it was over, you know, even something as simple as '*to know, know, know him is to love, love, love him*', it became monumental in some kind of way, now it's just blabbering noise and after you shut it off you've forgotten about it and you're glad – *Some Like It Hot*. Oh mercy! Spare me please! These things are just hooks, fish hooks in the back of your neck... nothing means anything, people just showing off, dancing to a pack of lies – lotta people gotta be dead first before anybody takes notice, the same people who praise you when you're dead, when you were alive they wouldn't give you the time of day. I like to wonder about some of these people who elevated John Lennon to such a mega-god as if when he was alive they were always on his side. I wonder who they think he was singing to when he sang 'just give me some truth. ' Everything is just too commercial, like a sprawling octopus, too much part of the system. Sometimes you feel like you're walking around in that movie *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* and you wonder if it's got you yet, if you're still one of the few or are you 'them' now. You never know do you? When people don't get threatened and challenged, I mean in some kind of way, they don't get confronted, never have to make decisions, they never take a stand, they never grow, live their lives in a fishtank, stay in the same old scene forever, die and never get a break or a chance to say goodbye. I have views contrary to all that. I think that this world is just a passing-through place and that the dead have eyes and that even the unborn can see and I don't care who knows it. I don't know, I can go off on tangents... things that got nothing to do with music... The great folk music and the great rock n' roll, you might not hear it again. Like the horse and buggy. Sure, a horse and buggy is more soulful than a car but it takes longer to get where you're going and besides that, you could get killed on the road."

Sitting across from Bob Dylan on this afternoon, one could see his influences very clearly. His speech sometimes flecked with the country-isms of his youth, a leather jacket draped on his shoulders, a sharp hand gesture with a cigarette barely holding its ash... for all the years of who-is-Bob-Dylan analysis, the answer seemed obvious. He still is, as he always has been, a lone figure with a guitar and a point-of-view.

"Basically, I'm self taught. What I mean by that actually is that I picked it all up from other people by watching them, by imitating them. I seldom ever asked them to take me aside and show me how to do it. I started out as a traveling guitar player and singer," Dylan reflected. **"It had nothing to do with writing songs, fortune and fame, that sort of thing. You know what I mean. I could always play a song on a concert-hall stage or from the back of a truck, a nightclub or on the street, whatever, and that was the important thing, singing the song, contributing something and paying my way. The most inspiring type of entertainer for me has always been somebody like Jimmie Rodgers, somebody who could do it alone and was totally original. He was combining elements of blues and hillbilly sounds before anyone else had**

thought of it. He recorded at the same time as Blind Willie McTell but he wasn't just another white boy singing black. That was his great genius and he was there first. All he had to do was appear with his guitar and a straw hat and he played on the same stage with big bands, girly choruses and follies burlesque and he sang in a plaintive voice and style and he's outlasted them all. You don't remember who else was on the bill. I never saw him. I only heard his records. I never saw Woody Guthrie in his prime. I think maybe the greatest of all those I ever saw was Cisco Houston. He was in his last days but you couldn't tell – he looked like Clark Gable and he was absolutely magnificent... I always like to think that there's a real person talking to me, just one voice you know, that's all I can handle – Cliff Carlysle... Robert Johnson, for me this is a deep reality, someone who's telling me where he's been that I haven't and what it's like there – somebody whose life I can feel... Jimmie Rodgers or even Judy Garland, she was a great singer... or Al Jolson... God knows there are so few of them, but who knows? Maybe there are just enough. I always thought that one man, the lone balladeer with the guitar could blow an entire army off the stage if he knew what he was doing... I've seen it happen. It's important to stay away from the celebrity trap. The Andy Warhol fame-for-a-minute type trip. The media is a great meatgrinder, it's never satisfied and it must be fed but there's power in darkness too and in keeping things hidden. Look at Napoleon. Napoleon conquered Europe and nobody even knew what he looked like... people get too famous too fast these days and it destroys them. Some guys got it down – Leonard Cohen, Paul Brady, Lou Reed, secret heroes, – John Prine, David Allen Coe, Tom Waits, I listen more to that kind of stuff than whatever is popular at the moment, they're not. just witchdoctoring up the planet, they don't set up barriers... Gordon Lightfoot, every time I hear a song of his, it's like I wish it would last forever. Pop culture, what is it? IBM, Calvin Klein, General Motors, Mickey Mouse, and that whole kind of thing, conformity to fashion, ideas, conformity to other people's opinions, conformity in the mirror, lots of singers who can't even deliver live on stage, use tapes and things... Van Gogh never sold but a few paintings while he was alive, incredible, as far as he was concerned he was a failure. I don't think for a minute though that he's having the last laugh cause that's not what I think it's about. Artists should remember that – There's a tremendous hypocrisy in this thing."

From the demos, to the songs, to the hits and the never-heards, this is a collection of music that anyone should take the time to listen to in sequence. And when the last notes of *Forever Young* disappear, consider this: Dylan's influence continues to be heard all around us, from his own work to the music of artists like Springsteen, The Clash, The Pretenders, U2, The Blasters, Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers and many others. Fan sponsored publications like *Telegraph* and *Wanted Man* pour over set lists from twenty years ago, as well as Dylan's movements of today. To many, Dylan's life is already the stuff of myth. To Dylan, it's a life only half begun. Just listen to the fire in his impassioned vocal on the *USA for Africa* single of *We Are The World*. A hero to many, Bob Dylan has his own definition of the word.

"I think of a hero as someone who understands the degree of responsibility that comes with his freedom, someone who's not afraid to jump in front of a freight train to save a loved one's life, to draw a crowd with my guitar, that's about the most heroic thing that I can do. To play a song to calm the king, well everybody don't get to do that. There's only certain things a King wants to hear. And then if he don't like it, he might send you to the gallows. Sometimes you feel like a club fighter who gets off the bus in the middle of nowhere, no cheers, no admiration, punches his way through ten rounds or whatever, always making someone else look good, vomits up the pain in the backroom, picks up his check and gets back on the bus heading out for another nowhere. Sometimes like a troubadour out of the dark ages, singing for your supper and rambling the land or singing to the girl in the window, you know, the one with the long flowing hair who's combing it in the candlelight, maybe she invites you up. Maybe she says 'Sing me another song, sweetness, sing me that song about the cat and the fiddle, the knave and the long sea voyage' or maybe she don't. You gotta be able to feel your

dream before anyone else is aware of it. 'Your parents don't like me they say I'm too poor'... Gotta learn to bite the bullet like Tom Mix, take the blows, like the song says. Or like Charles Aznavour, '*you must learn to leave the table when love is no longer being served*' but that's a hard thing to do. You got to be strong and stay connected to what started it all, the inspiration behind the inspiration, to who you were when people didn't mind stepping on you, it's easy to say but the air gets thin at the top, you get light-headed, your environment changes, new people come into your life..."

Bob Dylan stood and walked to a nearby window, he stared out at a small courtyard. A cat shrieked from an over-hanging balcony. Dylan was restless and ready to go. I asked him he viewed his impact upon modern culture. He shrugged.

"In the big picture, on the big stage, I'm not too sure, to take yourself seriously or to take seriously what other people are thinking, you know that could be your downfall. I mean it's a weakness. I know I've done some important things but in what context, I don't know, and also for who. It's hard to relate to fans. I mean I relate to people as people but people as fans, I'm not sure I know what that means and don't forget John Lennon was murdered by a so-called fan – I know it gives them all a bad name but so what? I don't think of myself as a fan of anybody, I am more of an admirer, so why should I think of anyone as a fan of me? If they like you, they do and if they don't, well that's their business – nobody owes anybody anything. And anyway fans are consumers, they buy products and the company tries to please the consumers. That type of thing can rule your life. If the fan don't like you he becomes somebody else's fan, like the Paul Simon song, *Got To Keep The Customer Satisfied* – I'm not gonna live and die behind that – I'm not selling breakfast cereal, or razor blades or whatever. I'm always hearing people saying how 'Dylan should do this and do that, make an album like he did in the sixties. ' How the hell do they know? I could make *Blonde on Blonde* tomorrow and the same people would probably say its outdated... that's the way people are. As far as the sixties go, it wasn't any big deal. Time marches on. I mean if I had a choice I would rather have lived at the time of King David, when he was the high King of Israel. I'd love to have been riding with him or hiding in caves with him when he was a hunted outlaw. I wonder what he would have been saying and about who – or maybe at the time of Jesus and Mary Magdalene – that would have been interesting huh, really test your nerve... or maybe even later in the time of the Apostles when they were overturning the world ... what happened in the '60's? Wiretapping? What was so revolutionary about it? You know, there was a time when people thought the world was flat and that women didn't have souls... you can say how ridiculous and how could they have been so stupid but nevertheless people did think it to be truth just like right now a lot of what's thought to be truth will later be proved false... actually I'm amazed that I've been around this long, never thought I would be. I try to learn from both the wise and the unwise, not pay attention to anybody, do what I want to do. I can't say I haven't done my share of playing the fool. There was never any secret. I was in the right place at the right time. People *dissect* my songs like rabbits but they all miss the point. I mean have you ever seen '*something's happening but you don 't know what it is do you, Mr. Jones*' played over the war in Lebanon? Or the Aids epidemic. Or Mengele's bones? Sometimes I think I've been doing this too long. I can understand why Rimbaud quit writing poetry when he was 19... How would I change my life? Yeah, well, sometimes I think that I get by on only 50% of what I got, sometimes even less. I'd like to change that I guess... that's about all I can think of."

September 1985
Scott Cohen Interview, California (For *Interview*)

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 531-535.

These abbreviated out-takes from the *Spin* interview by Scott Cohen appeared in *Interview* magazine, an Andy Warhol publication, in February 1986.

A FEW THINGS ABOUT BOB DYLAN AS TOLD TO SCOTT COHEN
You can tell a lot about someone by what they don't tell you.
Sometimes a simple shopping list can be more revealing than a person's life story

A DOZEN INFLUENTIAL RECORDS
"Lady's Man", Hank Snow
"Lucille", Little Richard
"High Lonesome Sound", Roscoe Holcomb
"Tom Joad", Woody Guthrie
"Mystery Train", Elvis Presley
"Not Fade Away", Buddy Holly
"Molly and Tenbrooks", Bill Monroe
"Get Back", Big Bill Broonzy
"Chauffeur Blues", Memphis Minnie
"Riding on Train 45", Delmore Brothers
"Ida Red", Smokey Mountain Boys
"Pictures From Life's Other Side", Hank Williams

FIVE BANDS I WISH I HAD BEEN IN
King Oliver Band
The Memphis Jug Band
Muddy Water's Chicago Band (with Little Walter and Otis Spann)
The Country Gentlemen
Crosby, Stills and Nash

SOME MOVIES I WISH I WAS IN
The Devil and Miss Jones
I Was a Zombie for the FBI
Ben Hur
Raintree County

QUESTIONS YOU CAN'T ANSWER
How does it feel to be a legend?
How does it feel to have influenced a bunch of people?
What did you change your name to?
Are you somebody?
Where's your music taking you?
Did you write that song for me?
Did you know Nixon?

FIVE FAVORITE MOVIE ACTRESSES
Hedy Lamarr (I can't remember what she was in, though)
Dorothy Dandridge (I loved her in a movie she really needed, with Trevor Howard)
Marilyn Monroe (The Asphalt Jungle)

Jane Russell (The Outlaw)
Darla (Little Rascals)

THREE AUTHORS I'D READ ANYTHING BY
Tacitus
Chekhov
Tolstoy

TWO FAVORITE HOCKEY PLAYERS
Sammy Williamson
Maurice "The Rocket" Richard

THREE PET PEEVES
Preachers who preach the "Wealth and Prosperity" doctrine
Women who sit and eat meat all day
Salesmen who slap you on the back and wink

WHAT'S FOR DINNER
Grilled corn on the cob, black-eyed peas, beetroot salad, spinach and pilaf, deep fried cauliflower, french-fried chicken and gravy, french-fried cabbage, pinto beans and rice cocoa angel cake

EVENTS I WISH I'D WITNESSED
Custer's Last Stand, Hannibal crossing the Alps, Lindbergh landing in Paris, Houdini on the East River

MY LAST SLICE OF PIZZA
Tony's, Broadway and 46th Street, 1981

A THREESOME I'D LIKE TO PLAY GOLF WITH
Paul Gauguin
Lee Iacocca
Edward Teller

A COUPLE OF ACTORS I'D LIKE TO PLAY ME IN MY LIFE STORY
Billy Dee Williams
Mickey Roonie

TIPS FOR GIRLS WHO'D LIKE ME TO LIKE THEM
Tell me everything

ONE THING I'D LIKE TO IMPROVE ABOUT MYSELF
My penmanship

SOME GREAT MINOR MASTERPIECES
"Bony Maronie"
"Surfin' Bird"
"Lonesome Town"

MY FAVORITE SHOT IN BASKETBALL
The three throw

A COUPLE OF PEOPLE I WOULDN'T MIND BEING FOR A MINUTE

Roy Acuff
Walter Matthau
Leonard Cohen

THE BEST CURE FOR THE BLUES
Ginger root

SOME PLACES I WOULDN'T WANT TO GO BACK TO
Auschwitz
Camp de Paris, Marseille
The Horse and Hounds Tavern, Edinburgh

THINGS I'LL ALWAYS MISS
Sweet kisses from the Black Queen
Trebuki Bay at sunset
White geese in the North Carolina sky
Four angels blowing marble trumpets in Times Square.

SOME THINGS I'D RATHER FORGET
Spaghetti at the airport in Helsinki, Lady Godiva at the cemetery in New Orleans, girl with the horse's head in Mexico

ONE THING I'D LIKE FOR VALENTINE'S DAY
Earmuffs

MY TWO FAVORITE INGREDIENTS IN JOHNNY CAKES
Corn meal and maple syrup

HOW TO LET HER DOWN EASY
Tell her you're down and out

TWO TRUTHS THAT AREN'T TRUE
God helps those who help themselves
Actors get up at 5 am

THE FURTHEST THING FROM MY MIND
Perpetual youth and St. James Infirmary

THE NEAREST FARAWAY PLACES
Cuba
Isle of Patmos

GAMES I PLAY
Crazy 8's
Dominoes
Chess
Hearts
Fan-tan
He say, she say

CLUBS I BELONG TO
Back-To-The-Wall Club
Night Watch

Merle Haggard Fan Club
Franz Kline Fan Club
Rockin' & Rhythm Club
Backup Rider Club

ONE LAST FAVOR I'D LIKE TO ASK
"Resist not evil, but overcome evil with good"

SEVERAL THINGS STILL BLOWIN' IN THE WIND
Three Little Pigs
The wages of sin
Lester Young's horn solo on "When Buddha Smiles"

September 1985
Scott Cohen Interview, California (*Spin*)

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 517-529.

Scott Cohen conducted this "interview" during late September 1985. A strange "interview" indeed. There are no questions, just a series of headings, which we are to presume prompted the given responses from Dylan. Apparently Cohen spent several days with Dylan in California and then kept in "constant touch" with him during the following two weeks as they added to the story.

The article appeared in the December 1985 issue of *Spin* (Volume 1, Number 8, issued in late October 1985). It has also manifested itself elsewhere under a number of guises including the *Johannesburg Star* of December 21st 1985 and in the concert program for the May 1990 shows at the O'Keefe Center For The Performing Arts. It has also appeared in an abbreviated "out-take" form in *Interview Magazine*.

DON'T ASK ME NOTHIN' ABOUT NOTHIN'. I JUST MIGHT TELL YOU THE TRUTH
BOB DYLAN, IN PERHAPS HIS MOST REVEALING INTERVIEW IN YEARS, PROVES THERE'S NOTHING MORE MYSTERIOUS THAN A NORMAL MUSICAL GENIUS.

Bob Dylan, poet laureate, prophet in a motorcycle jacket. Mystery tramp. Napoleon in rags. A Jew. A Christian. A million contradictions. A complete unknown, like a rolling stone.

He's been analyzed, classified, categorized, crucified, defined, dissected, detected, inspected, and rejected, but never figured out.

He blew into mythology in 1961 with a guitar, harmonica, and corduroy cap, a cross between Woody Guthrie and Little Richard. He was like the first punk folksinger. He introduced the protest song to rock. He made words more important than melody, more important than the beat. His smokey, nasal voice and sexy phrasings are unique. He can write surreal songs with a logic all their own – like a James Rosenquist painting or a Rimbaud prose poem – and simple, straight-from-the-heart ballads with equal ease. He can take the dark out of the night time and paint the daytime black.

He probably could have been the biggest sex symbol since Elvis, had he chosen to. Then Mick Jagger came along. The Stones, the Beatles, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, all paid him their due. The radical Weathermen took their name from him. He caused a riot at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival when he went on stage and played electric rock. The folk faction thought he sold out. Later, during the height of "flower power," when everyone was getting into Eastern religion, Dylan went to Jerusalem, to the Wailing Wall, wearing a yarmulke. A decade later he was a born-again Christian, or so it seemed, putting out gospel records. People discovered that he really wasn't where it's at.

It's not like Dylan suddenly got less political or more spiritual. Biblical references have always been in his songs. People have been calling him a visionary for years. Who knows? Suppose a spiritual revolution is going on and rock n' roll's just a prelude to something else. Who would make a better prophet than Dylan?

Sometimes, what looks large from a distance, close up ain't never that big. Dylan's like one of his lines, He lives pretty simply, in a nice house on secluded property on the California coast, with a bunch of chickens, horses, and dogs. The fact that he's more visible now and doing

ordinary things, like the Grammys, videos, even this interview, doesn't make him any less mysterious.

It adds to it.

YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME, GO AHEAD AND TALK

A lot of people from the press want to talk to me, but they never do, and for some reason there's this great mystery, if that's what it is. They put it on me. It sells newspapers, I guess. News is a business. It really has nothing to do with me personally, so I really don't keep up with it. When I think of mystery, I don't think about myself. I think of the universe, like why does the moon rise when the sun falls? Caterpillars turn into butterflies?

I really haven't remained a recluse. I just haven't talked to the press over the years because I've had to deal with personal things and usually they take priority over talking about myself. I stay out of sight if I can. Dealing with my own life takes priority over other people dealing with my life. I mean, for instance, if I got to get the landlord to fix the plumbing, or get some guy to put up money for a movie, or if I just feel I'm being treated unfairly, then I need to deal with this by myself and not blab it all over to the newspapers. Other people knowing about things confuses the situation, and I'm not prepared for that I don't like to talk about myself. The things I have to say about such things as ghetto bosses, salvation and sin, lust, murderers going free, and children without hope – messianic kingdom-type stuff, that sort of thing — people don't like to print. Usually I don't have any answers to the questions they would print, anyway.

WHO WOULD YOU WANT TO INTERVIEW?

A lot of people who aren't alive: Hank Williams, Apollinaire, Joseph from the Bible, Marilyn Monroe, John F. Kennedy, Mohammed, Paul the Apostle, maybe John Wilkes Booth, maybe Gogol. I'd like to interview people who died leaving a great unsolved mess behind, who left people for ages to do nothing but speculate. As far as anybody living goes, who's there to interview? Castro? Gorbachev? Reagan? The Hillside Strangler? What are they going to tell you? The destiny of the world's wealthiest man, that don't interest me. I know what his reward is. Anybody who's done work that I admire, I'd rather just leave it at that I'm not that pushy about finding out how people come up with what they come up with, so what does that leave you with? Just the daily life of somebody. You know, like, "How come you don't eat fish?" That really wouldn't give me answers to what I'm wondering about.

Dark Sunglasses

I started out with Batman and Robin-type sunglasses. I always thought the best kind of sunglasses are the motorcycle helmets with the black plastic masks on them. That way, nobody can recognize the back of your head either. With sunglasses, you buy them off the rack, if they fit, and put them on. Shoes are tougher. You go into a store, try this pair on, that pair on. I feel I have to buy something if I put it on. What I'm looking for is a pair of glasses that can see through walls, whether they're sunglasses or not.

ISN'T IT HARD TO WEAR DARK GLASSES AFTER ALL THESE YEARS?

Late at night it is, when I'm driving. I don't wear them all the time. I've gone through periods when I wear them, but I don't know why. I'm nearsighted, so I wear them for that reason.

HIGHWAY 61 REVISITED

People ask me about the '60s all the time. That's the first thing they want to know. I say, if you want to know about the '60s, read *Armies of the Night* by Norman Mailer, or read Marshall McLuhan or Abraham Maslow. A lot of people have written about the '60s in an exciting way and have told the truth. The singers were just a part of it. I can't tell them that much. Certain things I can remember very clearly. Others are a kinda blur, but where I was and what was happening I can focus in on if I'm forced to. Of course, there are people who can remember in vivid detail. Ginsberg has that talent and Kerouac had that talent to a great degree. Kerouac never forgot anything, so he could write anything because he could just remember.

MY BACK PAGES

Miles Davis is my definition of cool. I loved to see him in the small clubs playing his solo, turn his back on the crowd, put down his horn and walk off the stage, let the band keep playing, and then come back and play a few notes at the end. I did that at a couple of shows. The audience thought I was sick or something. Lily St. Cyr (the stripper), **Dorothy Dandridge, Mary Magdalene, that's my definition of hot**

My first pop hero was Johnny Ray. I saw him late '78. I think he was playing club lounges. He hasn't had a hit for a while. Maybe he needs a new record company. I hope the guy's still alive. People forget how good he was.

The only person I can think of who didn't return a phone call of mine was Walter Yetnikoff (president of CBS) **the summer before last. I placed it personally, direct dial, long distance, at 3 o'clock in the morning.**

The last record I bought was Lucille Bogan. She was a blues singer who I had heard of, but not her records. I don't buy too many contemporary records. I didn't go down to the record store and buy the record personally. I know someone who works in a record store in town and I called and asked him to set it aside. No, I didn't actually pick it up, somebody else did.

The first expensive thing I bought with my first big paycheck was a '65 baby-blue Mustang convertible. But a guy who worked for me rolled it down a hill in Woodstock and it smashed into a truck. I got 25 bucks for it.

The name on my driver's license is Bob Dylan. It was legally changed when I went to work for Folk City a few thousand years ago. They had to get my name straight for the union.

I never watch sports on TV, although I did see John McEnroe beat Jimmy Connors at Wimbledon when I was over in England last year. There was a TV set backstage and I had gotten there early and I paid attention to the whole thing. Usually I don't stay with something that long.

I used to play hockey when I was growing up. Everyone sort of learns how to skate and play hockey at an early age (in Minnesota). **I usually played forward, sometimes center. My cousin was a goalie at the University of Colorado. I didn't play too much baseball, because my eyes were kind of bad and the ball would hit me when I wasn't looking. I never played much basketball, unless I played with my kids. Football I never played at all, not even touch football. I really don't like to hurt myself.**

I have a good understanding with all the women who have been in my life, whether I see them occasionally or not. We're still always best of friends.

TANGLED UP IN BLUE

I once read a book of Nathaniel Hawthorne's letters to some girl, and they were extremely private and personal, and I didn't feel there was any of myself in those letters, but I could identify with what he was saying. A lot of myself crosses over into my songs. I'll write something and say to myself, I can change this, I can make this not so personal, and at other times I'll say, I think I'll leave this on a personal level, and if somebody wants to peek at it and make up their own minds about what kind of character I am, that's up to them. Other times I might say, well, it's too personal, I think I'll turn the corner on it, because why do I want somebody thinking about what I'm thinking about, especially if it's not to their benefit.

TALES OF YANKEE POWER

The best songs are the songs you write that you don't know anything about They're an escape. I don't do too much of that because maybe it's more important to deal with what's happening rather than to put yourself in a place where all you can do is imagine something. If you can imagine something and you haven't experienced it -it's usually true that someone else has actually gone through it and will identify with it

I actually think about Poe's stories, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*. Certainly, if you look at his life, he really didn't experience any of that stuff. But some fantastic stories came out of his imagination. Like, "Here I am stuck in this job I can't get out of. I'm working as a civil servant what am I going to do next? I hate this existence." So what does he do? He sits in his attic and writes a story and all the people take it to mean he's a very weird character. Now, I don't think that's an illegitimate way to go about things, but then you got someone like Herman Melville who writes out of experience – *Moby Dick* or *Confidence Man*. I think there's a certain amount of fantasy in what he wrote. Can you see him riding on the back of a whale? I don't know. I've never been to college and taken a literary course. I can only try to answer these questions, because I'm supposed to be somebody who knows something about writing, but the actual fact is, I don't really know that much about it I don't know what there is to know about it, anyway.

I began writing because I was singing. I think that's an important thing. I started writing because things were changing all the time and a certain song needed to be written. I started writing them because I wanted to sing them. If they had been written, I wouldn't have started to write them. Anyway, one thing led to another and I just kept on writing my own songs, but I stumbled into it, really, It was nothing I had prepared myself for, but I did sing a lot of songs before I wrote any of my own. I think that's important too.

DID YOU EVER SEND YOUR POEMS TO ANY POETRY MAGAZINES?

No, I didn't start writing poetry until I was out of high school. I was 18 or so when I discovered Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Phillip Whalen, Frank O'Hara, and those guys. Then I went back and started reading the French guys, Rimbaud and Francois Villon; I started putting tunes to their poems. There used to be a folk music scene and jazz clubs just about every place. The two scenes were very much connected, where the poets would read to a small combo, so I was close up to that for a while. My songs were influenced not so much by poetry on the page but by poetry being recited by the poets who recited poems with jazz bands.

THE REAL YOU AT LAST

Sometimes the "you" in my songs is me talking to me. Other times I can be talking to somebody else. If I'm talking to me in a song, I'm not going to drop everything and say, alright, now I'm talking to you. It's up to you to figure out who's who. A lot of times it's "you" talking to "you." The "I," like in "I and I," also changes. It could be I, or it could be the "I" who created me. And also, it could be another person who's saying "I." When I say "I" right now, I don't know who I'm talking about.

ALL I REALLY WANT TO DO

As long as I continue to make records and play, which I'm not through doing yet, I have to go along with what the scene is at the time. I'm not a Pete Seeger. I've actually done that every once in a while, where I have led two thousand, three thousand people through songs, but I haven't done it like Pete Seeger. He's a master at that, leading a mass of people in four-part harmony to a song not even in their language. I think he could appeal to people as much as Sting could, because he could make them feel like they matter and make sense to themselves and feel like they're contributing to something. Seeing Tears for Fears is like being a spectator at a football game. Pete is almost like a tribal medicine man, in the true sense of the word. Rock n' roll performers aren't. They're just kind of working out other people's fantasies.

BOB DYLAN'S 115TH DREAM

I signed a record contract with John Hammond, Sr., of Columbia Records in 1961. It was a big moment. I had been rejected by a lot of folk companies – Folkways, Tradition, Prestige, Vanguard. It was meant to be, actually. If those other companies had signed me, I would have recorded folk songs, and I don't think they would have stayed with me. Most of those companies went out of business, anyway.

Dream #116: The Freewheelin' album. **The girl on the cover with me is Suze Rotolo, my room mate at the time.**

NEWPORT, 1965

The first time I played electric before a large group of people was at the Newport Folk Festival, but I had a hit record out (Bringing It All Back Home)**, so I don't know how people expected me to do anything different. I was aware that people were fighting in the audience, but I couldn't understand it. I was a little embarrassed by the fuss, because it was for the wrong reasons. I mean, you can do some really disgusting things in life and people will let you get away with it. Then you do something that you don't think is anything more than natural and people react in that type of riotous way, but I don't pay too much attention to it.**

MOTORPSYCHO NITEMARE

In 1966 I had a motorcycle accident and ended up with several broken vertebrae and a concussion. That put me down for a while. I couldn't go on doing what I had been. I was pretty wound up before that accident happened. It set me down so I could see things in a better perspective. I wasn't seeing anything in any kind of perspective. I probably would have died if I had kept on going the way I had been.

GOSPEL PLOW

In 1979 I went out on tour and played no song that I had ever played before live. It was a whole different show, and I thought that was a pretty amazing thing to do. I don't know any other artist who has done that, has not played whatever they're known for. The *Slow Train* record was out and I had the songs to the next record and then I had some songs that never were recorded. I had about 20 songs that never had been sung live before, and nobody seemed to pick up on that. They were seeing me as if they were dropping into some club I was playing in and were to witness something that really wasn't for publicity purposes. Yet it got all kinds of negative publicity. The only thing that bothered me about it was that the negative publicity was so hateful that it turned a lot of people off from making up their own minds, and financially that can hurt if you got a show on the road.

The first time we went out on that tour, we had something like eight weeks booked. Two of the weeks were in San Francisco. In the review in the paper, the man did not understand any of the concepts behind any part of the show, and he wrote an anti-Bob Dylan thing. He probably never liked me anyway, but just said that he did. A lot of them guys say stuff like, "Well, he changed our lives before, how come he can't do it now?" Just an excuse really. Their expectations are so high, nobody can fulfill them. They can't fulfill their own expectations, so they expect other people to do it for them. I don't mind being put down, but intense personal hatred is another thing. It was like an opening-night critic burying a show on Broadway.

This particular review got picked up and printed in all the newspapers of the cities we were going to play to even before tickets went on sale, and people would read this review and decide they didn't want to see the show. So it hurt us at the box office, and it took a while to work back from there. I thought the show was pretty relevant for what was going on at the time.

POSITIVELY 4TH STREET

Outside of a song like *Positively 4th Street*, which is extremely one-dimensional, which I like, I don't usually purge myself by writing anything about any type of quote, so-called, relationships. I don't have the kinds of relationships that are built on any kind of false pretense, not to say that I haven't. I've had just as many as anybody else, but I haven't had them in a long time. Usually everything with me and anybody is up front. My-life-is-an-open-book sort of thing.

And I choose to be involved with the people I'm involved with. They don't choose me.

HEART OF GOLD

The only time it bothered me that someone sounded like me was when I was living in Phoenix, Arizona, in about '72 and the big song at the time was *Heart of Gold*. I used to hate it when it came on the radio. I always liked Neil Young, but it bothered me every time I listened to *Heart of Gold*. I think it was up at number one for a long time, and I'd say, "Shit, that's me. If it sounds like me, it should as well be me." There I was, stuck on the desert someplace, having to cool out for a while. New York was a heavy place. Woodstock was worse, people living in trees outside my house, fans trying to batter down my door, cars following me up dark mountain roads. I needed to lay back for a while, forget about things, myself included, and I'd get so far away and turn on the radio and there I am, but it's not me.

It seemed to me somebody else had taken my thing and had run away with it, you know, and I never got over it. Maybe tomorrow.

HAS ANYBODY SEEN MY LOVE?

Tight Connection to My Heart **is a very visual song. I want to make a movie out of it. I don't think it's going to get done. I think it's going to go past on the way, but of all the songs I've ever written, that might be one of the most visual. Of all the songs I've written, that's the one that's got characters that can be identified with. Whatever the fuck that means. I don't know, I may be trying to make it more important than it is, but I can see the people in it. Have you ever heard that song** ***I'm a Rambler, I'm a Gambler*****,":** ***I once had a sweetheart, age was 16, she was the Flower of Belton and the Rose of Saline*****? Same girl, maybe older. I don't know, maybe it should stay a song. In most of my songs, I know who it is that I'm singing about and to. Lately, since '78, that's been true and hasn't changed. The stuff before '78, those people have kinda disappeared, '76, '75, '74. If you see me live, you won't hear me sing too many of those songs. There's a certain area of songs, a certain period that I don't feel that close to. Like the songs on the** ***Desire*** **album, that's kind of a fog to me. But since '78 the characters have all been extremely real and are still there. The ones I choose to talk about and relate to are the ones I find some kind of greatness in.**

MILLION DOLLAR BASH

I know going on the Grammy's is not my type of thing, but with Stevie (Wonder) **it seemed like an interesting idea. I wasn't doing anything that night. I didn't feel I was making any great statement. For me, it was just going down to the place and hanging my clothes.**

IDIOT WIND

Videos are out of character for me, too. The latest ones I've done with Dave Stewart are all right. The other ones, I don't know, I was just ordered around. I didn't pay much attention to those videos. You have to make them if you make records. You just have to. But you have to play live. You can't hide behind videos. I think once this video thing peaks out, people will get back to see who performs live and who don't.

X-RATED

I don't think censorship applies to me. It applies more to Top 40 artists. People who have hit records might have to be concerned with that, but I don't have those kinds of records that I'd have to be concerned about what I say. I'm just going to write any old song I feel like writing. The way I feel about it, I don't buy any of those records, anyway. I don't even like most of that music. I couldn't care at all if the records you hear on the radio are X-rated or R-rated. I don't think it's right, however, I'm opposed to it. I think every single song that you hear can be seen in another point of view from what it is. People have been reading stuff into my songs for years. I'd probably be the first one with a letter on their record.

WHICH LETTER?

F and B, Fire and Brimstone. But I don't know about the B, that could stand for Boring. Certainly a lot of stuff today would fall into that category.

RAINY DAY WOMEN

I've always been drawn to a certain kind of woman. It's the voice more than anything else. I listen to the voice first. It's that sound I heard when I was growing up. It was calling out to me. When everything was blank and void, I would listen for hours to the Staple Singers. It's that sort of gospel singing sound. Or that voice on the Crystal's record, *Then He Kissed Me*, Clydie King, Memphis Minnie, that type of thing. There's something in that voice, that whenever I hear it, I drop everything, whatever it is.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE BODY DOESN'T MATCH THE VOICE?

A body is a body. A woman could be deaf, dumb, crippled, and blind and still have soul and compassion. That's all that matters to me. You can hear it in the voice.

I FORGOT MORE THAN YOU'LL EVER KNOW

I never had that much to do with Edie Sedgwick. I've seen where I have had, and read that I have had, but I don't remember Edie that well. I remember she was around, but I know other people who, as far as I know, might have been involved with Edie. Uh, she was a great girl. An exciting girl, very enthusiastic. She was around the Andy Warhol scene, and I drifted in and out of that scene, but then I moved out of the Chelsea Hotel. We, me and my wife, lived in the Chelsea Hotel on the third floor in 1965 or '66, when our first baby was born. We moved out of that hotel maybe a year before *Chelsea Girls*, and when *Chelsea Girls* came out, it was all over for the Chelsea Hotel. You might as well have burned it down. The notoriety it had gotten from that movie pretty much destroyed it.

I think Edie was in Chelsea Girls. I had lost total touch with her by that time, anyway. It may just have been a time when there was just a lot of stuff happening. Ondine, Steve Paul's Scene, Cheetah. That's when I would have known Edie if I would have known her, and I did know her, but I don't recall any type of relationship. If I did have one, I think I'd remember.

I THREW IT ALL AWAY

I once traded an Andy Warhol "Elvis Presley" painting for a sofa, which was a stupid thing to do. I always wanted to tell Andy what a stupid thing I done, and if he had another painting he would give me, I'd never do it again.

ANOTHER SIDE OF BOB DYLAN

I never read Freud. I've never been attracted to anything he has said, and I think he's started a lot of nonsense with psychiatry and that business. I don't think psychiatry can help or has helped anybody. I think it's a big fraud (pun not intended) **on the public. Billions of dollars have changed hands that could be used for far better purposes. A lot of people have trouble with their parents up until they're 50, 60, 70 years old. They can't get off their parents. I never had that kind of problem with my parents. Like John Lennon, "Mother": "Mother, I had you but you never had me." I can't imagine that. I know a lot of people have. There are a lot of orphans in the world, for sure. But that's not been my experience. I have a strong identification with orphans, but I've been raised by people who feel that fathers, whether they're married or not, should be responsible for their children, that all sons should be taught a trade, and that parents should be punished for their children's crimes.**

Actually, I was raised more by my grandmother. She was a fantastic lady. I love her so much, and I miss her a lot. But, getting back to the other thing, it all needs to be shaken up, and it will be. I never had any barriers to get across that were that clear to me, that I had to bust down to anything I truly loved. If I had any advantage over anybody at all, it's the advantage that I was all alone and could think and do what I wanted to. Looking back on it, it probably has a lot to do with growing up in northern Minnesota. I don't know what I would have been if I was growing up in the Bronx or Ethiopia or South America or even California. I think everybody's environment affects him in that way. Where I grew up... it's been a long time since. I forgot about it once I went east. I couldn't remember very much about it even then. I remember even less about it now. I don't have any long great story to tell about when I was a kid that would let anybody know how it is that I am what I am.

PATTI SMITH SAYS YOU WERE RIMBAUD IN A PREVIOUS INCARNATION

I don't know if she's right or wrong, but Patti Smith, then, of course, knows a lot of deep details that I might not be aware of. She might be clued in to something that's a little beyond me. I know at least a dozen women who tell me they were the Queen of Sheba. And I know a few Napoleons and two Joan of Arcs and one Einstein.

ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER

There weren't too many Jews in Hibbing, Minnesota. Most of them I was related to. The town didn't have a rabbi, and it was time for me to be bar mitzvahed. Suddenly a rabbi showed up under strange circumstances for only a year. He and his wife got off the bus in the middle of winter. He showed up just in time for me to learn this stuff. He was an old man from Brooklyn who had a white beard and wore a black hat and black clothes. They put him upstairs of the café, which was the local hangout. It was a rock n' roll café where I used to hang out, too. I used to go up there every day to learn this stuff, either after school or after dinner. After studying with him an hour or so, I'd come down and boogie. The rabbi taught me what I had to learn, and after he conducted this bar mitzvah, he just disappeared. The people didn't want him. He didn't look like anybody's idea of a rabbi. He was an embarrassment All the Jews up there shaved their heads and, I think, worked on Saturday. And I never saw him again. It's like he came and went like a ghost. Later I found out he was Orthodox. Jews separate themselves like that. Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, as if God calls them that. Christians, too. Baptists, Assembly of God, Methodists, Calvinists. God has no respect for a person's title. He don't care what you call yourself.

A PUFF OF SMOKE

I've never been able to understand the seriousness of it all, the seriousness of pride. People talk, act, live as if they're never going to die. And what do they leave behind? Nothing. Nothing but a mask.

KNOCKIN' ON HEAVEN'S DOOR

Whenever anybody does something in a big way, it's always rejected at home and accepted someplace else. For instance, that could apply to Buddha. Who was Buddha? An Indian. Who are Buddhists? Chinese, Japanese, Asian people. They make up the big numbers in Buddhism. It's the same way with Jesus being a Jew. Who did he appeal to? He appeals to people who want to get into heaven in a big way. But some day the true story will reveal itself, and by that time, people will be ready for it, because it's just going in that direction. You can come out and say it all now, but what does it matter? It's going to happen anyway. Vanities of vanities, that's all it is.

THEY'RE NOT SHOWING ANY LIGHTS TONIGHT

I went to Bible school at an extension of this church out in the Valley in Reseda, California. It was affiliated with the church, but I'm not a believer in that born-again type thing. Jesus told Nicodemus, "A man must be born again." And Nicodemus said, "How can I go through my mother's womb?" and Jesus said, "You must be born of the spirit" And that's where that comes from, that born-again thing. People have put a heavy trip on it. People can call you what they want. The media make up a lot of these words for the definition of people. I mean, who's a person anymore? Everything's done for the media. If the media don't know about it, it's not happening. They'll take the littlest thing and make it spectacular. They're in the business of doing that.

Everything's a business. Love, truth, beauty. Conversation is a business. Spirituality is not a business, so it's going to go against the grain of people who are trying to exploit other people. God doesn't look at people and say, "That's a banker, that's a dentist, that's an oil-well driller."

WHAT'S THE MESSIANIC COMPLEX?

All that exists is spirit, before, now and forever more. The messianic thing has to do with this world, the flesh world, and you got to pass through this to get to that The messianic thing has to do with the world of mankind, like it is. This world is scheduled to go for 7,000 years. Six thousand years of this, where man has his way, and 1,000 years when God has His way. Just like a week. Six days work, one day rest The last thousand years is called the Messianic Age. Messiah will rule. He is, was, and will be about God, doing God's business. Drought, famine, war, murder, theft, earthquake, and all other evil things will be no more. No more disease. That's all of this world.

What's gonna happen is this: you know when things change, people usually know, like in a revolution, people know before it happens who's coming in and who's going out All the Somozas and Batistas will be on their way out, grabbing their stuff and whatever, but you can forget about them. They won't be going anywhere. It's the people who live under tyranny and oppression, the plain, simple people, that count, like the multitude of sheep. They'll see that God is coming. Somebody representing Him will be on the scene. Not some crackpot lawyer or politician with the mark of the beast but somebody who makes them feel holy. People don't know how to feel holy. They don't know what it's about or what's right. They don't know what God wants of them. They'll want to know what to do and how to act Just like you want to know how to please any ruler. They don't teach that stuff like they do math, medicine, and carpentry, but now there will be a tremendous calling for it. There will be a run on godliness, just like now there's a run on refrigerators, headphones, and fishing gear. It's going to be a matter of survival. People are going to be running to find out about God, and who are they going to run to? They're gonna run to the Jews, 'cause the Jews wrote the book, and you know what? The Jews ain't gonna know. They're too busy in the fur business and in the pawnshops and in sending their kids to some atheist school. They're too busy doing all that stuff to know. People who believe in the coming of the Messiah live their lives right now as if he was here. That's my idea of it, anyway.

I know people are going to say to themselves, "What the fuck is this guy talking about?" But it's all there in black and white, the written and unwritten word. I don't have to defend this. The scriptures back me up. I didn't ask to know this stuff. It just came to me at different times from experiences throughout my life. Other than that, I'm just a rock n' roller, folk poet, gospel-blues-protest guitar player. Did I say that right?

BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Politics have changed. The subject matter has changed. In the '60s there was a lot of people coming out of schools who were taught politics by professors who were political thinkers, and those people spilled over into the streets. What politics I ever learned, I learned in the streets, because it was part of the environment. I don't know where somebody would hear that now. Now everybody wants their own thing. There's no unity. There's the Puerto Rican Day parade, Polish Day, German Week, the Mexican parades. You have all these different types of people all waving their own flags, and there's no unity between all these people. In the '60s, there wasn't any separation. That's the difference between then and now that I can see. Everybody now is out for their own people and their own selves, and they should be 'cause they look around and see everything's unbalanced.

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

The times still are a-changin', every day. I'm trying to slow down every day, because the times may be a-changin', but they're going by awfully fast. "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child. When I became a man, I put away childish things."

September 1985
Mikal Gilmore Interview, Los Angeles, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 511-516.

Mikal Gilmore, staff writer for the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, conducted this interview at his own home sometime during late September 1985. It was published on October 13 1985 under the headline of

"BOB DYLAN — AFTER ALL THESE YEARS IN THE SPOTLIGHT THE ELUSIVE STAR IS AT THE CROSSROADS AGAIN."

The man who showed up at my door one afternoon a few weeks back looked exactly like I had hoped and feared he would: with his mazy brown hair and his taut smile and with smoky sunglasses masking his inscrutable stare, he looked just like Bob Dylan. Almost too much so. Dressed in a sleeveless torn T-shirt, weather-worn black jeans and black motorcycle boots and, at 44, looking far more fit than I had seen him in any recent photos or video appearances, he seemed remarkably like the image of the younger Bob Dylan that is burned into our collective memory; the keen fierce man who often tore apart known views of the world with his acerbic gestures and eloquent yowls.

What brought Dylan to my door was simply that we had an interview to do, and since he had come to Hollywood anyway that day, this was the easiest place for him to do it. While this certainly made the meeting a lot more thrilling for me, it also made it a bit scarier. More than 20 years of image preceded him. This was a man who could be tense, capricious and baffling, and who was capable of wielding his image at a whim's notice in a way that could stupefy and intimidate not only interviewers but sometimes friends as well.

What I found instead was a man who didn't seem too concerned with brandishing his image – even for a moment. He offered his hand, flashed a slightly bashful smile, then walked over to my stereo, kneeled down and started to flip through a stack of some unfiled records on the floor – mostly L. P. s by older jazz, pop and country singers. He commented on most of what he came across: **"The Delmore Brothers – God, I really love them. I think they've influenced every harmony I've ever tried to sing... This Hank Williams thing with just him and his guitar — man, that's something, isn't it? I used to sing these songs way back, a long time ago, even before I played rock n' roll as a teenager... Sinatra, Peggy Lee, yeah, I love all these people, but I tell you who I've really been listening to a lot lately — in fact, I'm thinking about recording one of his earlier songs — is Bing Crosby, I don't think you can find better phrasing anywhere"**.

That's pretty much how he was that afternoon: good-humored and gracious, but also thoughtful and often elaborate in his answers. And sometimes – when he talks about his Minnesota youth, or his early days in the folk scene under the enthrallment of Woody Guthrie – his voice grew softer and more deliberate, as if he were striving to pick just the right words to convey the exact detail of his memory. During these moments he sometimes lapsed into silence, but behind his sunglasses his eyes stayed active with thought, flickering back and forth as if reading a distant memory.

For the most part, though, sipping a Corona beer and smoking cigarettes he seemed generous and relaxed, sometimes even surprisingly candid, as he ranged through a wide stretch of topics. He talked about his recent work in videos: **"Making these things is like pulling teeth. For one thing, because of that movie *Renaldo And Clara*** (Dylan's 1978 film of the Rolling Thunder

Revue – widely viewed as a disaster)**, I haven't been in a place where I could ask for my own control over these things – plus, because my records aren't exactly selling like Cyndi Lauper's or Bruce's, I didn't feel I had the credibility to demand that control"**.

"But the company wanted me to try one more (to help boost *Empire Burlesque's* sales) **and I said I would, as long as I got to name Dave Stewart** (of Eurythmics) **as director. His stuff had a spontaneous look to it, and somehow I just figured he would understand what I was doing. And he did: He put together a great band for this lip-sync video and set us up with the equipment on this little stage in a church somewhere in West L.A. So between all the time they took setting up camera shots and lights and all that stuff, we could just play live for this little crowd that had gathered there".**

"I can't even express how good that felt – in fact, I was trying to remember the last time I'd felt that kind of direct connection, and finally I realised it must have been back in the '50s, when I was 14 or 15 years old playing with four-piece rock n' roll bands back in Minnesota. Back in those days there weren't any sound systems or anything that you had to bother with. You'd set up your amplifiers and turn them up to where you wanted to turn them. That just doesn't happen anymore. Now there are just so many things that get in the way of that kind of feeling, that simple directness. For some reason, making this video just made me realise how far everything has come these last several years – and how far I'd come".

His reaction to pop's new social activism, and such efforts as *Live Aid*, *U.S.A. for Africa* and *Farm Aid*, is somewhat mixed. **"While it's great that people are supporting *U.S.A. for Africa* and *Farm Aid*, what are they really doing to alleviate poverty? It's almost like guilt money. Some guy halfway round the world is starving so O.K., put 10 bucks in the barrel, then you can feel you don't have to have a guilty conscience about it. Obviously, on some level it does help, but as far as any sweeping movement to destroy hunger and poverty, I don't see that happening".**

"Still, *Live Aid* and *Farm Aid* are fantastic things, but then musicians have always done things like that. When people want a benefit, you don't see them calling dancers or architects or lawyers or even politicians – the power of music is that it has always drawn people together".

"But at the same time, while they're asking musicians to raise money, they're also trying to blacklist our records, trying to take somebody like Prince and Madonna off the radio – the same people that they ask to help raise funds. And it isn't just them: when they're talking about blacklisting records and giving them ratings, they're talking about everybody".

Dylan is pleased by Bruce Springsteen's growing popularity, but he has a warning too. **"Bruce knows where he comes from – he has taken what everybody else has done and made his own thing of it – and that's great. But somebody'll come along after Bruce, say 10 or 20 years from now, and maybe they'll be looking to Bruce as their primary model and somehow miss the fact** (that his music comes from Elvis Presley and Woody Guthrie)**. In other words all they're going to get is Bruce, they're not gonna get what Bruce got".**

"If you copy somebody – and there's nothing wrong with that – the top rule should be to go back and copy the guy that was there first It's like all the people who copied me over the years, too many of them just got me, they didn't get what I got".

Dylan was a bit less expansive when it came to discussing his own historical presence in rock n' roll. He seemed more moved or involved when discussing the inspiration he felt during his early immersion in rock n' roll and the folk, beat and poetry scenes than in deliberating over any questions about his own triumphs – such as the seismic impact he had on international pop

culture once he fused folk tradition, rock revolt, political insight and poetic ability into a personalised, myth-making style.

"There are certain things you can say you've done along the way that count," he said, **"but in the end it's not really how many records you sell** (Dylan has sold more than 35 million) **or how big a show you play or even how many people end up imitating you. I know I've done a lot of things, but if I'm proud of anything, it's maybe that I helped bring somebody like Woody Guthrie – who was not a household name – to a little more attention, the same way that the Rolling Stones helped to bring Howling Wolf more recognition. It's because of Woody Guthrie and people like him that I originally set out to do what I've done. Stumbling onto Woody Guthrie just blew my mind".**

"Then again, I never really dwell on myself too much in terms of what I've done. For one thing, so much of it went by in such a flash, it's hard for me to focus on. I was once offered a great deal of money for an autobiography, and I thought about it for a minute, then I decided I wasn't ready. I have to be sat down and have this stuff drawn out of me, because on my own I wouldn't think about these things. You just go ahead and you live your life and you move onto the next thing, and when it's all said and done, the historians can figure it out That's the way I look at it".

Despite his reluctance, Dylan did look back recently at some length at the behest of Columbia Records, which has been trying for three years to elicit his co-operation and enthusiasm over *Biograph*, a five-L.P. retrospective of his career from 1962 to 1981. The package (which is due for release in early November) features 53 tracks, including 18 previously unreleased recordings and three scarce singles. Just as importantly, the set also includes a 36-page booklet by author-screenwriter Cameron Crowe (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*) that features extensive commentary and reflections by Dylan. His own critiques of his political anthems, love songs, religious declarations, narrative epics, poetic fancies, rock inventions and long-buried gems are fascinating.

Except for Crowe's booklet, Dylan hasn't much use for the *Biograph* project. **"I've never really known what this thing is supposed to be,"** he said, **"There's more stuff that hasn't been heard before, but most of my stuff has already been bootlegged, so to anybody in the know, there's nothing on it they haven't heard before. I probably would've put different things on it that haven't been heard before, but I didn't pick the material. I didn't put it together and I haven't been very excited about this thing. All it is, really, is repackaging, and it'll just cost a lot of money. About the only thing that makes it special is Cameron's book".**

Perhaps Dylan's objections to *Biograph* derive from an aversion to being consigned to any kind of definitive history when so much of his history remains to be written. Perhaps they also stem from an understanding that no single collection could ever bind or explain a career as wide-ranging and restive as his, nor could it ever satisfy the critics, detractors, defenders and partisans who have scrutinised, acclaimed, assailed and debated his work with more fervor and attention than any other American post-war musician has received. Beginning with his ninth album, *John Wesley Harding* (1968), virtually every subsequent release has been greeted as either a comeback, a stinging disappointment or an out-and-out betrayal of his early promise and beliefs.

While this later work hasn't affected pop culture as much as his early songs did (but then, what could?), it's also true that much of it amounts to a resourceful body of music – often beautiful and daring, sometimes perturbing or confused, but always informed by an aspiring and uncompromising conscience.

Still, while *Empire Burlesque* sold respectably (around the half-million mark), it didn't attain the commercial prominence that was expected. Does that bother or disappoint Dylan?

"Yeah," he said without hesitation. **"In fact, it concerns me to a point where I was thinking about regrouping my whole thought on making records. If the records I make are only going to sell a certain amount, then why do I have to spend a lot of time putting them together? You see, I haven't always been into recording all that much. It used to be that I would go in and try to get some kind of track which was magical, with a vocal on it, and just wait for those moments. I mean, talk about** (Bruce Springsteen's) **Nebraska. People say to me, "When you gonna make a Nebraska album?" Well, I love that record, but I think I've made five or six Nebraska albums, you know".**

Dylan stopped, shrugged and poured a little more beer into his glass. **"You know,"** he said, **"I can't release all the stuff that I want to release. I've got a lot of just melodic instrumentals laying around. I was thinking the other day that maybe I should put them out, but I can't. I've also got a record of just me and Clydie King singing together and it's great, but it doesn't fall into any category that the record company knows how to deal with. It's like... well, something like the Delmore Brothers: It's very simple and the harmonies are great. If it was up to me I'd put that kind of stuff out, or I would've put some of it on *Biograph* but it's not up to me. Anyway, who's to know what people would make of it?"**

I'd heard similar stories from various sources over the last few years – about whole projects that had been discouraged, if not altogether nixed by CBS. I'd even heard tapes of some of the unreleased works, and many of them are stunning. Such still-unreleased tracks as *Blind Willie McTell*, *Death Is Not The End* and *Lord Protect My Child* are among the most stirring work he has done, providing sharp commentaries on physical and spiritual despair and hard-earned moral hope. Hearing these, as well as the better material on *Infidels* and *Empire Burlesque*, one realises that Dylan still has a great deal to say – that he is once again at a creative crossroads. At the same time, one fears that he may withhold such uncompromising work out of deference to the expectations of the marketplace.

That was a matter I didn't get to explore because, as quickly as Dylan can enter a room, he can also leave one. **"It's late. I should go,"** he said, standing up, offering his hand and heading for the door. Looking out and realising that night had fallen, he finally took off his sunglasses. It was nice to look, even if just for a moment, into those clear blue eyes.

In a way, I was glad that the question had gone unasked. How was I going to put it: Are you going to redeem every promise we've ever inferred from your work and legend? It was fitting to remember something Sam Shepard once said of Dylan; "The repercussions of his art don't have to be answered by him at all. They fall on us as questions and that's where they belong". That his art still inspires such questions tells me everything I need to know about his remaining promise.

September 1985
Charles Young interview for MTV, California

Source: *Talkin' Bob Dylan 1984 & 1985 (Some Educated Rap)* by Stewart P. Bicker, pp. 47-49.

CY: I was wondering what your feelings were about this kind of public expectation that is put on you.

BD: Well you know I'm not running for any office, it's not like I have to try and please all the people. Singers and musicians seem to have more of an authority with the people than say a movie star would. I don't know why that is, but they seem to hang onto to every single thing that a singer might say, whereas a movie star who's subject to just as much idolatry – they don't care what he does. You know, they'll see him in any movie. I don't know if that makes any sense, but I don't think it's fair to hang onto a singer such a great burden... to be a leader. Especially as nobody follows them anyway.

CY: What was it about the state of American farms that made you want to participate in Farm Aid?

BD: Well the idea came to me when all that money was being raised for the famine in Africa. I'd gotten a lot of letters from people who were having their farms repossessed.

BD: I think musicians have always responded to people in need. You see musicians usually start out with nothing, don't forget that. Anybody who has reached any kind of success has started out with nothing, because musicians... it's like all you know how to do to escape from the hum-drum of daily existence it's something only you can do that nobody else can take away. So musicians always keep a tie to wherever they came from.

CY: The mood on this new record seemed to be quite friendly, there's a lot of stuff about love. Whereas during your Christian period there seemed to be an element of self-righteousness. Is that a fair perception?

BD: Yeah, that's a fair perception. But you know there are many sides to the coin, and the longer you go on the more sides you show. Sides that are there to be unravelled. And at this time that was just the record. But I believe in the other things too... self-righteousness would be just to repeat what you know has been written down in scripture some place else. It's not like you're trying to convince anybody of anything, you're just saying what the original rule is, and it's just coming through you. But if someone else can get past you saying it and just hear what the message is, well then it's not coming from you but through you. And I don't see anything wrong in that.

CY: I've been told that you're somewhat dissatisfied with some of your past videos, is that true?

BD: (Laughing) **I don't know, I never even saw my past videos, except in passing you know. I've never been that excited about 'em you know.**

CY: But you were more excited with what Dave Stewart came up with?

BD: Yeah, I was more excited to work with him because I've always liked his work a lot.
I'd heard that Dave was a good director, so I called him you know, er... and asked him if he wanted to do the video – and he said he would – so we just did it.
I would be going (to Dave Stewart's studio in London) **just to make a record in that type of atmosphere. You know, the way Dave explained it, it sounds as if it's not so controlled. When you're working in the studios here the clocks are always running, people are always looking at their watches, and there's lunch-breaks and phone calls. So I figured it might be easier to make a lot of records...**

CY: Bob, you look pretty healthy these days, are you jogging, taking care of yourself?

BD: Well I feel healthy, (laughter) **I don't know what I've been doing. I'm not doing anything differently, I'm just... maybe the longer you do it – maybe the healthier you get.**

So, for a person who might not know who I am you know... it covers a lot of different periods, it's just a re-package kind of thing. There are a bunch of old songs and some new things that haven't been heard before, they aren't new but they just have never been released.
I'll be touring next year, a certain amount of shows... you know like sixty to one hundred, I'm not really sure how many shows I'd want to do... but I'll have a touring group…

19 September 1985
Bob Brown (20/20 ABC TV) Interview, Malibu California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1051-1052.

An interview with Bob Brown for a profile on the 20/20 television program which takes place on Bob's estate at Malibu. Interestingly, he reveals that he was not at all convinced about the message behind *We Are The World* – **"I don't think people can save themselves."**

BB: Do your children have some kind of an idea of what you meant?

BD: I think so, on some kind of level, but when I was growing up in the fifties, the thirties to me didn't even exist. I just couldn't imagine them in any kind of way. So I don't suspect anybody growing up now will really understand what the sixties were all about.

BD: I used to think it was better if you just live and die and no-one knows who you are.

From the beginning Dylan, now 44 years old has shied away from publicity, granting few print interviews, never agreeing to a television network news interview until now. We spoke with him on a hillside on his estate in Malibu, California, where the wind blew in from the Pacific just below his house. Because the mythology surrounding Dylan has been so embroiled in change and controversy it was interesting to find him low key, cordial, soft spoken.

BB: Depending on how your music has evolved there have been people who have actually got angry because they felt it had changed. Did that ever bother you?

BD: Well, it's always disappointing, you know, if when people, er, decide for one reason or another they don't like your work any more. But, er... you know, it's just one of those things. You can't try to please people in that kind of a way because then you'd just, er, gonna be doing... er... you'll never live it down, you know... it'll just be... you know... always be dogging you around that you might be being a fake about the whole thing.

BB: So it's sort of a no-win situation, I guess.

BD: It's not important what other people call you, if you yourself know you're a fake, that's tougher to live with.

BB: Is protest song an accurate description of some of the things you were doing?

BD: Yeah, I guess so. But the real protest songs were written really in the thirties and forties, *Which Side Are You On*, mining type songs, union kind of songs. Er... that's where the protest movement developed from. There's still a strain of that type of thing in what I do, it's just more broad now.

BB: Do you view the lyrics that you write as poetry?

BD: I always felt the need for that type of rhyme to say any type of thing that you wanted to say. But then again I don't know if I call myself a poet or not. I would like to but I'm not really qualified, I don't think, to make that decision. Because I come in on such a back door that... I don't know what a, you know, Robert Frost or Keats or T.S. Eliot would really think of my stuff. It's more of a visual type thing for me: I could picture the color of the song or the shape of it or who it is that I'm trying to appeal to in this song and what I'm trying to almost reinforce my feelings for. And I know that sounds sort of vague and abstract, but I've got a handle on it when I'm doing it.

BD: The phrasing I stumbled into. Some of the old folksingers used to phrase things in an interesting way... and then I got my style from seeing a lot of outdoor type poets who would recite their poetry. When you don't have a guitar you recite things differently,

and there used to be quite a few poets in the jazz clubs who would recite with a different type of attitude.

BD: Well, people can change things and make a difference... but there is a lot of false prophets around though. And... that's the trouble, people say they think they know what's right and other people they get people to follow them because they have a certain type of charisma. And there's always people willing to take over you know, people want a leader you know – and there'll be more and more of them.

BB: There have been times when Born Again Christianity, orthodox Judaism... both of those were important to you?

BD: Yeah.

BB: Or is it a broader thing for you?

BD: No... I wanna figure out what's happening, you know. And... so I did look into it all.

BB: Did it make life easier?

BD: Not necessarily. No!

BB: Did it make it clearer?

BD: It definitely made it clearer. There's a place you have to work certain things out.

BB: What is it that you do have to work out?

BD: Well, you have to work out where your place is... And who you are. Er... but we are all spirit, it's all we are; we're just walking, you know, dressed up in a suit of skin... and we're gonna leave that behind.

BD: It's like people buying a song and the money going to the starving people in Africa... well you know, it's a worthwhile idea but I wasn't so convinced about the message of the song (*We Are The World*). **To tell you the truth I don't think people can save themselves... I just don't agree with that type of thing.**

BD: I like the fans, but I don't feel I have an obligation to be an example to them... like maybe a baseball player or a football player would. I don't think I really have to set an example that somebody else has to live up to.

BB: What kind of beliefs do you have in yourself to write the kind of songs you write?

BD: Oh... there's not really a belief. I really have very little belief in myself to do anything. I just pull it off, you know, it's amazing to me that I even do it.

October 1985
David Fricke Interview, Los Angeles, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke* pp. 273-276.

An interview in a Los Angeles hotel, published in *Rolling Stone* on December 5th 1985.

"I've made all the difference I'm going to," Bob Dylan declares. **"My place is secure, whatever it is. I'm not worried about having to do the next thing or keeping in step with the times. I've sold millions of records. I've done all the big shows. I've had all the acclaim at one time or another. I'm not driven anymore to prove that I'm the top dog."**

Dylan makes this startling announcement, the closest he's ever come to a formal retirement speech, with minimal flourish – a slow drag on his Kool, a quick swig of Heineken. It is strange talk from a man in the midst of a rare interview blitz, ostensibly to aid his latest album, *Empire Burlesque*.

But while Dylan is cordial, even frank, in his answers (**"I'm always accused of not being helpful"**, he says, chuckling), there is a hint of weary indignation in his voice, as if he's grown tired of his own weighty legend. At forty-four, Dylan no longer worries about making hits – or history.

"I don't feel I've got anything to prove", he insists, sitting poolside at a Los Angeles hotel, a black leather jacket draped over his scarecrow shoulders against the early evening chill. **"I've got every legitimate right to do what I want to. Whether it sells records or not, I don't know."**

Dylan's new statement of purpose comes after years of apparent insecurity, of coping with radical shifts in mainstream rock and young audiences with new expectations and heroes. Since easing away from the combative fundamentalism of his Christian albums, he has zigzagged from the rootsy sizzle and modest AOR polish of 1983's *Infidels* to Arthur Baker's animated, high-tech mixing job on *Empire Burlesque*. Nervy experiments in the tradition of his electric and later country transformations in the Sixties, both LPs suggest an uncertainty about his relevance in the MTV decade.

Yet his continued influence is unquestionable, evident in the new acoustic pop of Suzanne Vega and the hardcore protest-punk of Husker Du and the Minutemen. When Dylan traveled to Moscow earlier this year to appear at a poetry festival (he was permitted to sing his "poetry"), he was amazed to see young Russian fans thrusting dog-eared copies of his earliest albums at him for autographs.

"The young people who normally would have come out to see me didn't know I was there," he says almost apologetically. **"But one day I went to this banquet, and the streets were packed with people who somehow found out. There wasn't any music atmosphere; it was very controlled. They didn't ask anything. They just wanted me to sign their records. I don't know where they got them."**

Dylan has also been unusually visible at home this year. He made three videos to promote *Empire Burlesque*, including two with Dave Stewart of Eurythmics. He closed the July 13th Live Aid concert in Philadelphia and plugged in with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers for a vibrant electric set at Farm Aid. A suggestion he made from the Live Aid stage about using some of the

incoming millions to pay off a few U. S. farm mortgages inspired Willie Nelson and Neil Young to set Farm Aid in motion – proof positive that when Bob Dylan mutters, the world still listens.

"I didn't think anybody heard me, because I couldn't even hear myself say it," Dylan says with a wry smile. He blames the ragged quality of his Live Aid contribution on sound problems. The mix onstage was so muddy, he complains, that he didn't think anybody in John F. Kennedy Stadium or in the global TV and radio audience noticed his remark.

"But it occurred to me at that moment that a lot of money was being raised for people to be self-sufficient. And it came to me that people in this country need to be self-sufficient. I thought it was relevant."

However, he questions the comparisons drawn between recent charity rock-events like Live Aid and USA for Africa (he also sang on *We Are The World*) and the student activism of yesteryear. **"The big difference between now and the sixties is that then it was much more dangerous to do that sort of thing. There were people trying to stop the show in any kind of way they could. There was a lot more violence. Then, you didn't know which end the trouble was coming from. And it could come at any time."**

"Now people seem to be a lot more passive about the whole thing. 'If you can do something great'. Nobody's going to take any offense to it."

"The same limp sentiment also dominates the record charts," he grumbles. **"The kids are getting a raw deal. Nobody's telling them anything through music anymore."** He casts a disdainful look over his shoulder at the hotel PA system, which is piping Duran Duran's *Hungry Like The Wolf* into the crisp evening air. **"They're just getting a lot of consumer products that aren't doing them any good. Sooner or later, they're going to rebel against it all."**

It is unlikely that the young upstarts will be claiming *Empire Burlesque* for their anthem as they battle Tears for Fears to the death. Dylan acknowledges, without bitterness, that he's not part of the daily soundtrack for a lot of the eighties teens. **"They don't need to follow me,"** he concedes. **"They have their own people to follow."** Indeed, Dylan's recent albums have sold modestly compared to the platinum achievements of spiritual heirs like Bruce Springsteen and Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler. When asked if he heard any of himself in Springsteen's *Nebraska*, he barks, **"Yeah, but so what? I'm too old to start over and too young to blow my horn about all the people that ripped me off."**

Yet *Empire Burlesque* – highlighted by the *Hurricane* -like disco gallop of *When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky* – represents a significant gamble on Dylan's part.. Unwilling to bow to the pressures of mainstream success, he is nevertheless keen to use the new pop science to his own ends.

"I don't know how do the thing with the studio where you use it as another instrument." he admits helplessly. **"A lot of kids can, but it's too late for me."**

Instead, he recruited Arthur Baker, best known for remixing other peoples records beyond recognition, not to commercialize *Empire Burlesque* but to retain the "live" integrity of the original sessions. Dylan cut the album in isolated spurts of creativity over some eighteen months, mostly in Los Angeles with an electric supporting cast that included Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, some of Petty's Heartbreakers and ex-Rolling Stone Mick Taylor. *Clean Cut Kid* dates back to the earliest sessions. *Tight Connections To My Heart (Has Anybody Seen My Love)* is a reworked version of a song originally cut for *Infidels*.

"My difficulty in making a record," Dylan continues, **"is that when I record something in a studio, it never sounds anything like it when I get the tapes back. Whatever kind of live sound I'm working for, it always gets lost in the machines. Years ago, I could go in, do it and it would translate onto tape. It gets so cleaned up today that anything wrong you do doesn't get onto the tape. And my stuff is based on wrong things."**

He expects Dave Stewart to make the most of his wrongs when the two go into the studio by year's end to cut some tracks for a possible spring release. (Dylan apparently does not plan to issue any of the material he recently cut with Keith Richards and Ron Wood in several impromptu hotel-room sessions) Stewart has already done wonders for Dylan's ailing video image with his sympathetic executive production of the clips for *When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky* and *Emotionally Yours*. For the former, a lively black and white mock-concert sequence, Stewart assembled a punk who's who (including former Blondie drummer Clem Burke and Feargal Sharkey of the disbanded Undertones) to mime vigorously behind Dylan. *Emotionally Yours*, which segues into romantic flashbacks after the gig, was done at his record company's request, Dylan mentions coolly.

"If you want to sell records, I'm told you gotta make videos," he says with a chuckle. **"I know they're thought of as an art form, but I don't think they are. They're on and they're over too fast."** – this coming, of course, from the director of the four-hour surrealist treatment of the '75 Rolling Thunder tour, *Renaldo and Clara*. Dylan's main complaint with his past videos, though, is that he rarely got his money's worth. Surprisingly, he cites George Lois' unique concept for *Infidels Jokerman*, a daring illustration of Dylan's lyrics with paintings by Michelangelo and Hieronymus Bosch spliced with deadpan close-ups of Dylan. He admits the paintings were spectacular, but he hated those close-ups.

"I never know what anybody's doing with me. They filmed me from thirty yards away. What are they looking at? When I saw the videos, all I saw was a shot of me from my mouth to my forehead on the screen. I figure, "Isn't that somethin'? I'm paying for that?"

Dylan's Farm Aid rock-out with the Heartbreakers reaffirmed his stage powers. He's looking forward to a major concert tour next year, his first full-scale US trek since the half-sacred, half-secular *Shot Of Love* shows in 1981. If the Heartbreakers weren't available for a lengthy jaunt across the States in '86, Dylan's not worried about forming another road unit.

"Actually, anybody can play with me and I can play with anybody," he jokes. **"I'm sure I could go to a hall sometime and pick people out of the audience to play with me. I'm not looking for anything special in a band. I'm looking for guys who are enthusiastic and know the kind of music I know, who can play strongly on the structure of the song and have a knowledge of folk music and rock 'n roll."**

Dylan's roots in the former and cataclysmic impact on the latter over two decades are neatly summarized in the new Columbia Records five-album retrospective set, *Biograph*, an exhaustive accounting of Dylan's best work from 1962 to 1981 that includes eighteen previously unreleased recordings. **"It's not a record that people are going to make a big fuss over,"** Dylan ho hums, noting that a few of the rarities are actually alternate takes (*Heart Of Mine* and *Forever Young* among them and that most have been bootlegged extensively over the years). But *Biograph* is significant both as a collection of essential Dylan recordings, fifty three in all, and for it's round-up of elusive gems like *Percy's Song*, a live *Visions of Johanna* and a seething electric *I Don't Believe You* from his 1966 Belfast concert with the future members of the Band. Dylan also cared enough to write his own liner notes in which he explains for the first time, track by track, the people, places and motives behind his best-known songs.

"I'm not reluctant to talk about my songwriting, not no one has ever really asked me the right things," Dylan says, grinning. **"I just tried to be brief, remember kind of how things happened. I'm not really a nostalgia freak. Every time you see my name, it's 'the sixties this, the sixties that'. It's just another way of categorizing me."** In the *Biograph* booklet, he says, **"I had the chance to clarify a lot of wrong things said about me. It was a chance to set a few things straight."**

The one songwriting secret Dylan does not divulge is how he does it. **"It's still hard for me to talk about playing, about songwriting. It's like a guy digging a ditch. It's hard to talk about how the dirt feels on the shovel."**

October 1985
Robert Hilburn Interview, Malibu, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 537-540.

Hilburn was asked by Columbia Records to conduct a promotional interview for the *Biograph* collection. The interview was conducted in early October in the backyard of Dylan's Malibu home just before he left for London. It was published in the *L.A. Times* on 17th November 1985 and was syndicated to various newspapers in the U.S. such as the *Chicago Sun Times* who printed it also on the 17th under the banner –

AT 44: BOB DYLAN LOOKS BACK

Maybe it's because he did not give interviews at all for years, or maybe it is just that he is the most important songwriter of the modern pop era, but I cannot imagine passing up the chance to talk to Bob Dylan – even if strings are attached.

The interview invitation from Columbia Records suggested that Dylan only wanted to discuss his latest album: *Empire Burlesque*, the studio collection from last summer and *Biograph*, the ambitious retrospective set that just hit the stores.

Dylan himself quickly cut the strings. He showed little interest in those subjects as he sat on a chair in the backyard of his Malibu home.

"The new releases?," Dylan asked almost sheepishly, **"I hope you don't make this look like some carny trying to hawk his own records. I don't know if you even want to hit on the records. When people think of me, they are not necessarily going to buy the latest record, anyway. They may buy a record from years ago. Besides I don't think interviews sell records."**

So why did Dylan agree to a series of interviews, including his first formal network TV interview (for "20/20")?

"I really haven't had that much connection or conversation (over the years) **with the people at Columbia"** he said, referring to his record label for most of two decades. **"Usually I turn in my records, and they release them. But they really like this record** (Empire Burlesque)**, so they asked me to do some videos and a few interviews to draw attention to it."**

"But that doesn't mean I want to sit around and talk about the record. I haven't even listened to it since it came out I'd rather spend my time working on new songs or listen to other people's records. Have you heard the new Hank Williams album, the collection of old demo tapes? it's great."

About the project, Dylan said: **"Columbia wanted to put out** (a retrospective) **album on me a few years ago. They had pulled out everything** (from earlier albums) **that could be classified as love songs and had it on one collection. I didn't care one way or another, but I had a new record coming out, so I asked them not to do it then."**

"I guess it's OK for someone who has never heard of me and is looking for a crash course or something. But I've got a lot of stuff that is lying around all over the place in cassette recorders that I'd put out if I was putting the set together."

One thing about *Biograph* that does please Dylan is a 36-page booklet written by Cameron Crowe, who wrote numerous *Rolling Stone* magazine profiles and the book and then the

screenplay *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. The *Biograph* text is a brief, affectionate look at Dylan's life with generous quotes from the songwriter.

Dylan, 44, is not being open just to the press these days. For years he has tended to be isolated even when doing a benefit concert – avoiding photographers and, often, other artists backstage by arriving just before showtime and leaving quickly after the last number.

At September's Farm Aid benefit at the University of Illinois however, he was almost leisurely hanging out with Tom Petty, whose band backed him on the show, and chatting with other performers including Randy Newman, Lou Reed and Emmylou Harris. Normally camera-shy, Dylan did not even turn away when a TV crew and a few photographers pointed their lenses at him as he sat on steps outside his dressing room trailer.

One reason for the naturalness, a backstage observer joked at Farm Aid, was that Dylan wanted to prove – after his disastrously spacey performance with the Stones' Keith Richard and Ron Wood at Live Aid – that he still had his faculties.

"Yeah," Dylan grumped about July's Live Aid concert in Philadelphia, **"They screwed around with us. We didn't even have any** (sound) **monitors out there. When they threw in the grand finale at the last moment, they took all the settings off and set the stage up for the 30 people who were standing behind the curtain. We couldn't even hear our own voices** (out front)**, and when you can't hear, you can't play; you don't have any timing. It's like proceeding on radar."**

Dylan's Malibu home, on a bluff overlooking the ocean, is quite secluded and a guard shack at the only entrance to the property keeps the curious away. The atmosphere is rural. A dirt driveway runs through the property, and lots of small animals, including chickens and a few large dogs roam around.

On this cool afternoon, Dylan was wearing the same outfit that he has always seemed to be wearing in recent years, jeans looking as if they were ready for the hamper, a wrinkled T-shirt and motorcycle boots. Except for Europe last year, he has not toured much in the 80's. Still he is on the road so much – Minnesota, New York, London or some more isolated exotic places – that he does not really call any place home.

"I'm just not the kind of person who seems to be able to settle down," he said as two dogs edged against his chair. **"If I'm in L.A. for say, two months, I'll be in the studio for maybe a month out of that time, putting down ideas for songs."**

"On the other days I'm usually recuperating from being in the studio. I usually stay in a long time, all night, part of the day. Then I'll go off to New York or London and do the same thing. I'm going to London soon to work on some stuff with Dave Stewart."

Stewart, one half of the Eurythmics, joined Dylan on guitar on the *Emotionally Yours* video.

Dylan expects to concentrate on performance videos because he has not been pleased with concert clips based upon his songs – either the arty *Jokerman* video or more conventional narrative of *Tight Connection*.

He would probably just as soon not do videos at all, but realizes their importance in the market place.

"It used to be that people would buy a record if they liked what they heard on the radio, but video has changed a lot of that," he said. **"If someone comes along now with a new song, people talk about 'Well, what does it look like?' It is like 'I saw this new song'."**

One continuing question for Dylan is his much-publicized 'born-again' Christian phase. He has said he does not like the term "born-again", and his music has moved away from the aggressive dogma of the *Slow Train Coming* album. But Dylan still refuses to define his exact religion.

"I fell like pretty soon I am going to write about that," he said. **"I feel like I got something to say but more than you can say in a few paragraphs in a newspaper."**

He did smile at the mention of the hostile reactions generated during his 'born-again' Christian tours of 1979 and 1980. **"If you make people jump on any level, I think it is worth while, because people are so asleep."**

Beyond music, Dylan's special interest these days is art. He maintains an artist's studio behind his Malibu house and showed off his character sketches, with the nervous excitement of a proud parent. He hopes to put them in a book and write something to go with each drawing. Dylan is also thinking about a book of short stories.

On his continued energy he said: **"It's kinda funny. When I see my name anywhere, it's (often) the '60s this or the '60s that. I can't figure out sometimes if people think I'm dead or alive."**

This man who has been hounded, dissected, idolized and ridiculed over the years, stepped outside the studio. The sun had set and the dogs raced over to him. He paused – as if searching for a summary statement. **"I've had some personal ups and downs, but usually things have been pretty good for me,"** he finally said. **"I don't feel old, but I remember in my 20's** (when) **I'd think about people in their 30's as old. The thing I really notice now is time."**

"Things used to go a lot slower. The days now go by so very fast. But I've never felt numb (about life)**. There is something about the chords, the sound of them that makes you feel alive. As long as you can play music, I believe you'll feel alive."**

November 1985
Denise Worrell Interview, Malibu, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 907-915.

A major interview conducted by *Time* correspondent Denise Worrell in a small cabin at Dylan's Malibu estate during November 1985. It was published in her book *Icons: Intimate Portraits* which also contains interviews with numerous other stars including Madonna, Nastasia Kinski and Bette Middler. Extracts from the interview appeared in *Time* magazine on November 25th 1985 under the heading *It's All Right In Front – Dylan on life and rock*.

BOB DYLAN DOWN EXECUTIONER'S ROW

The sun is slipping fast under the edge of the silver ocean when I reach Malibu. Halfway down Blue Water Street there is a high hedge growing along a chain-link fence. I follow it and turn left into a dirt drive. On the right in the middle of an open field are a guardhouse and a dog. Lined up along the fence on the left are ancient, disabled cars: one a green-and-white ambulance with pointed fins, another a battered white trailer with no wheels. A gate hidden in the fence opens, and Bob Dylan's assistant, Carol, asks me to follow her. We walk past a vegetable garden. Dozens of chickens are scratching and pecking in the yard. A Mexican man feeding the chickens smiles at us. Dogs run around and bark. We take a path to a cabin some distance from the main house which fades into twilight.

The walls, floors, and ceilings of the cabin are made of dark wood. There is a blaze a foot high in the corner fireplace. A stereo is sitting on a cardboard box by the door. There are a couple of couches and a coffee table with a bouquet of pink peonies on it. A room on the right is completely bare. There is a kitchen on the left. A wooden stairway leads to what must be a sleeping loft upstairs. I look out a window and see a brick patio with a Jacuzzi. Feeble light comes from a lantern near the fire. I sit down, and Carol brings in coffee and a plate of chocolate finger wafers. She says "I'll go get Bob."

Dylan stands in the shadows of the doorway for half a second. It is chilly, but he is wearing light blue cotton shorts, almost like men's boxer shorts, and a Hawaiian-style blue short-sleeved shirt that is open to the waist. He has a pair of blue thongs on his feet. He gets a cup of coffee and sits next to me on the couch. He has a pack of Kool cigarettes in his chest pocket and smokes maybe five or six while we talk. His fingernails are all very long and pointed. It looks as if he files them to keep the points. His hair is curly and brown and reaches almost to his shoulders. He has stubble on his face. There are bags under his eyes, a diamond stud in his left ear. He doesn't smile, but he laughs a few times. He seems slightly harassed or tired and he keeps rubbing his eyes and running his fingers through his hair and pulling it. Once or twice he leans his head on his arm against the couch. While he sits he sometimes pulls his bare legs underneath him.

He seems oblivious to his surroundings. It is cold and dark, and grows darker as the fire dies out. Once Dylan gets up to put on another log. It burns quickly, and finally we are sitting in near total darkness. I can't see my notes except where I have highlighted them in pink, yellow, orange, and green fluorescent marker. Outside the door, dogs bay without stop. We talk about *Biograph*, the unprecedented five-record retrospective of his career just released by Columbia Records; we talk about a few other things. Dylan, forty-four, is intense but vague about all details. There are long, aching pauses in the conversation when he considers his thoughts. He cannot be hurried. He is rambling and repetitive but then speaks a word or phrase that stuns,

that conjures truth. As he talks I get the sense of waves slapping the side of a boat, or of many rings circling a planet.

BIOGRAPH

"It wasn't my idea to put the record out. This record had been suggested in the past, but I guess it just didn't come together until recently. I think it's been in the works for like three years. I had very little to do with it. I didn't choose the songs. A lot of people probably had a hand in it. The record company has the right to do whatever they please with the songs. I didn't care about what was on the record. I haven't sat down and listened to it. I don't know why. I guess I just never did. Even when I make a record, I listen to it once or twice before it's out, and then once it's out, I don't really listen to it anymore. I'm always doing my current record. Last year's record is sort of in the past. I didn't really take a hand in this because my enthusiasm for making records might not be what it was twenty years ago. I don't know."

THIS SILENCE OF TONGUES IT WAS BUILDING

"This five-record set could have been all unreleased songs. If it was worth my while, I could put together a ten-record set of unreleased songs of mine, songs that have never gotten out and songs that have been bootlegged. Some of those unreleased songs I have, some I have in arrangements. I have a lot of the stuff in different places, just cassettes we made here and there. I would have to call some people, I guess, and say, 'What have you got that I can't remember?' Yeah, I've got songs I can't remember. Everybody's got songs they can't remember. I'm the final judge of what goes on and off my records. This last record I just did, Empire Burlesque, there were nine songs I knew belonged on it, and I needed a tenth. I had about four songs, and one of those was going to be the tenth song. I finally figured out that the tenth song needed to be acoustic, so I just wrote it. I wrote it because none of the other songs fit that slot, that certain place. So now what would happen to those four songs? One of them really didn't get finished, the others just got left. When I go back in the studio next time, I'll look at all that stuff. I'll sort through it. It's on twenty-four-track tape somewhere."

ROBBED MY BOOTS AND I WAS ON THE STREET AGAIN

"Yeah, a lot of my stuff has been bootlegged. What can you do, you know? If you don't want some stuff to be bootlegged or if you want to save it or if it's something that you're working on, you just won't show it to anybody. It bugs me when the stuff I've never finished is bootlegged. I don't know. There was one kid who showed me a record that he got on me of stuff that I was working on. I don't know why anybody would really go out of their way to want something like that. It interrupts your natural working habits. I mean, if there is something you would like to do with some tune and you see that it's already out there, it can get discouraging. Some of the stuff hasn't gotten out, but most of it does. I'm always real surprised that it does. I think it happens to most everybody. *The Basement Tapes*, they were bootlegged. I didn't pay much attention to the *Basement Tapes*. I thought they were what they were – a bunch of guys hanging out down in the basement making up songs. I never really cared much for bootlegged tapes of concert shows because usually the sound quality is so bad that a lot of what really goes on, the excitement of it all, really gets lost. I don't listen to the bootlegged stuff. I really don't have any feeling about it one way or another. There's nothing you can do about it. Bootlegging is a big business. It's like the dope business – it's supposed to be illegal, but a lot of people make their livelihood off it."

GOT TO PLAY YOUR HARP UNTIL YOUR LIPS BLEED

"Years ago I didn't spend much time recording. I was putting a lot of pressure on myself to do it right and fast then, because of the confinement of the studio. But nobody else works that way. Now technology has made it kind of difficult to work that way. You have to fill up the space on a record now because the space has a noise of its own, whereas before, when you were working on a four-track or an eight-track, the space was something that had a

spontaneity and a life of its own. Now it doesn't. It's just dead space. So therefore you have to fill up the space. People's ears have become accustomed to hearing every space filled up, and they're throwing everything in. More is there to make you think less. If you hear a song now with space in it, it doesn't sound right, it doesn't sound quite as together as something that's got multilayers of sound and multirhythms. To me, the machinery is making sound the thing, not the song. I'm trying to find a balance. You know the old Sun Records, the way they would sound with just the upright bass and a guitar and a snare drum? That's the sound I love the best, just that simple sound. My sound is basically backbeat and Stratocaster guitar or an old Martin guitar. But you can't record that way anymore. It won't sound the same. It will sound sterilized. You have to work within the sterilization of the industry. Anything raw you put in, it's going to come out sterilized. My thing is playing live, but that's even been affected because a lot of groups, they don't play live. They use a lot of preprogrammed stuff to make things sound like they do on records. It's not really too uncommon to be thinking that in a few years when you go hear a live band, that won't sound right either because people's ears will be so programmed to be hearing what they're hearing on records. I don't use synthesizers. I know I could if I was taught how, and put some time into just working the machines. But playing with a synthesizer is not really as much fun as playing with an instrument. I guess those machines are for people who are more inclined to be visionaries, who imagine something and work it out. As opposed to people who carry it around with them. That's what I do."

COME AROUND YOU ROVIN' GAMBLERS AND A STORY I WILL TELL

"I go through different periods when I'll write a bunch of things, then go through long spells where I don't really write anything. I just jot down little phrases and things I overhear, people talking to me, stuff like that. I write them on paper, write them out with my hand. Usually when I have some kind of deadline pressure I'll get prolific. When I do work, I work for long periods of time, then I lay back for a minute. I'll work for, like, twenty-four or thirty hours, fourteen hours at a time, and then readjust after that. Then I do it again four or five days later. I write a bunch of different ways. Sometimes I'll be able to hear the melody and everything right in my head, sometimes I'll play on the guitar or piano or something, and some kind of thing will come. Other times I'll just go into the studio and play riffs with other people and then later on listen to the tapes and see what that wants to be. Sometimes the words and music come together. Other times the melody will come first, or the words. You might write a song because you feel a certain way about a certain thing, like the *Sun City* record – Steve Van Zandt felt a certain way, so he wrote a song. I've done that, and then I've done the other way where the song is not really about any certain thing but it all seems to be focused in on a feeling. As I go on, I find it harder to hold on and develop a certain idea. You have to be almost a monk to hold on to something and explore all the possibilities of it. I haven't really done that as much as maybe I should or I could. When I play live, I always find stuff in my songs that I could have done a little better, could have written a little better. I don't know. It's not for me to understand my songs. I don't need to understand them. I don't make that a part of it. They make sense to me, but it's not like I can explain them. I mean, while I am doing them I have an understanding of them, but that's all, you know."

AND IN COMES ROMEO, HE'S MOANING

"What voice I have, what little voice I have – I don't really have a good voice. I do most of my stuff with phrasing. I think of myself as just having an edge when it comes to phrasing. I guess my voice sounds pretty close to a coyote or something."

IDIOT WIND

"What is that, rock? I don't like rock, just plain rock. I don't know what rock is. Is that Twisted Sister? I don't know what that is. I hear people talking about it all the time. I like rock and roll; now that's a different thing. Rock is hard; that don't mean nothing to me. But rolling

is smooth and easy. A lot of the roll is gone from the music I hear, sure it is. Look at the buildings you see every day. They're huge, towering skyscrapers. Concrete and steel. Massive coliseums is where they play rock. It's the environment, right? Hard rock. Things got to have roots. There are still roots, but they're only there on record. It's like people studying literature. Who do they read? They read Shakespeare. Literature must have been at a high level when Shakespeare was writing his plays. You can't say that today if you go and see a play. It's going to be very far down the line from Shakespeare. The same way with rock n' roll, rhythm and blues, and all that. We're living in a time where you can still feel it. It might be remote, but you can still feel it, whereas fifty or sixty years from now, it's only going to be a dream. How many radio stations play Howlin' Wolf or Jimmy Reed or Muddy Waters? Most young black guys don't even know who those people are."

TOO MUCH OF NOTHING

"There's no way you can listen to the radio now and think that all those songs are on because of the music. Something else is putting them on the radio. It's not because the songs or the music is so good. It's something else entirely. I don't much listen to radio. Every time I hear it, it's depressing. Most of the stuff isn't meant to be heard by someone who is in anything but an up mood. I'm not in an up mood most of the time, or half the time. My moods vary. The stuff you hear on the radio would make it seem like everything's all right everywhere. You really have to seek your salvation in some other place than the popular radio. It used to be you could hear in the different parts of the country different types of music. I don't remember when this was, maybe in the sixties. Wherever you went, you would hear different music that was popular in different regions. What was popular in Los Angeles was different than what was popular in New York. There would be different music playing in Nashville than in Austin or Seattle or Chicago. Now, wherever you go, it's the same. If it's the Top 10 in New York, it's the Top 10 in Miami. Why do you suppose that is?"

SOMETHING IS HAPPENING HERE BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, DO YOU MISTER JONES?

"I have never cared whether critics liked or disliked my albums, but I have cared that they didn't understand where they were coming from or what I was up to. I can truly say that there have been a lot of critics who have listened to my stuff, and they have been just deaf. They haven't really heard what the heart of the matter is. They haven't heard what was there to be heard. All they heard were preconceived ideas of their own, which they brought to whatever record of mine they were listening to. I haven't understood the critics' evaluation of my stuff. It's deeper than 'He's trying to do this' or 'He's trying to do that' or 'He's not succeeding at this' or 'there's none of this.' Critics reviewed the movie *Renaldo and Clara* saying that was an ego trip, whereas, what is an ego trip? Bob Dylan up on the screen is an ego trip? Who made Bob Dylan a myth, anyway? Isn't *Scarface* an ego trip? What's not an ego trip if you make a movie? I don't know. The criticism of the movie was not about the movie. It was about what the movie could have been or should have been or something like that. That carries over to my records. Some intellectual critics who want to see things keep evolving, who want to feel the same kick at forty-five or fifty that they felt when they were fifteen and sixteen, a lot of those intellectual people, they stand in my way."

'TWAS IN ANOTHER LIFETIME

"My first five albums? I don't even know what the first five were. I don't know if I could name all twenty-nine of my records, but I could name some of them. I liked a bunch of albums I did in the eighties. I liked *Street Legal* a whole lot. I did that in the seventies. I liked all the albums, sort of, I guess. There's always something on all the records I liked. When you make them, you like them. My favorite songs of all time aren't anything I've written. I like stuff like *Pastures of Plenty* and *Mississippi Mama and Me* and *That's All* and *I Get a Kick Out of You*. My favorites are old forties songs, I think."

EZRA POUND AND T.S. ELIOT FIGHTING IN THE CAPTAIN'S TOWER

"At certain times I read a lot of poetry. My favorite poets are Shelley and Keats. Rimbaud is so identifiable. Lord Byron. I don't know. Lately if I read poems, it's like I can always hear the guitar. Even with Shakespeare's sonnets I can hear a melody because it's all broken up into timed phrases so I hear it. I always keep thinking, 'What kind of song would this be?'"

JOKERMAN

"There's some humor in my songs. I don't know, I think so. Some other people might not get it. I think there are funny things inside a lot of them. Some there aren't. It's kind of mixed up so much that I wouldn't be one to just point and say, 'This is funny.' Some of these things are just foggy, some of these things I just don't have a fix on. I'm not really a good authority on my stuff. I'm a better authority maybe on Woody Guthrie's stuff than I am on my own stuff."

TOMORROW IS A LONG TIME

"For me the sixties seem just like yesterday. Time has a strange way of eluding you, you know. I mean, spiritually there is no time. There's no sixties, no eighties. When we say the sixties or the seventies or the forties, I don't know, we can't touch that. What are the sixties? We can't reach out and touch it any more than we can touch the nineties or the 1800s. I'm not so overwhelmed by sixties, seventies, fifties. It seems, though, that at a certain time there was more to discover all the time. It doesn't seem that way now. Kids grow up real fast. I've got kids. They grew up fast, faster than I grew up. A hundred years ago they grew up even slower. You ate by candlelight then, you know what I mean? All the comforts are real deceiving as to what life's all about. All the crutches. Society, you know. Western civilization."

THE TRUTH WAS OBSCURE, TOO PROFOUND AND TOO PURE, TO LIVE IT YOU HAVE TO EXPLODE

"I don't think each person has his own individual truth. How could you have your own personal truth? Who would give it to you? If you had it, why would you have to go to school? Why would you have to get a job? If you had your own personal truth, even truth you think you might know, whose truth is it? Is it your truth? Did you make it up? What's inside is just confusion. But what's inside has been put inside, you know. Whatever culture you're in, that puts it inside. So when you're searching inside for something and you say, 'Well, I have my own thing inside,' well, that's been put inside by cultural forces. They just bombard you. It's an all-out attack to stick stuff into your brain."

YOU WERE BORN WITH A SNAKE IN BOTH OF YOUR FISTS WHILE A HURRICANE WAS BLOWING

"Well, people tell me about the myth, You know. Some people are in awe. It doesn't penetrate me for some reason. I wish it did because then I might be able to use it to some advantage. I mean, there must be some advantage to it. I haven't been able to figure out what it is as yet. [He laughs] **I don't really think too much on myself, you know. It's a waste of time for me to think like that. Oh, I don't know where I fit in now. God, life is short enough without having to dwell on how you fit in. The best you can do is just survive through it."**

AND MUTTERED UNDERNEATH HIS BREATH, 'NOTHING IS REVEALED'

"Prophet. I might be that. [He laughs] **I still might be. You never know anything for certain, especially something like that. But when you think back to certain events, there's a possibility they may be true. Or you may just think they're true. Who really knows?"**

OH, MAMA, CAN THIS REALLY BE THE END

"I've never felt that it was over for me in music today. I still feel like I've got more to do. As long as I can do it live on stage, I'll still be doing it, and as long as I'm performing live, making records just goes with that. A while back I started writing a novel called *Ho Chi Minh in Harlem*. He was a short-order cook there in the twenties before he went back to Vietnam – it's a documented fact. It excited me there for a minute. It's possible I'll finish it if I get

dedicated to it and decide that this is something that really needs to be done, or I need to do this. I did this song with Sam Shepard last year. It was called *Danville Girl*. A long ballad, about fifteen minutes. I heard some people talking about making a movie out of that. I'd like to write some short stories, but I'd have to go to a log cabin in the mountains somewhere and say, 'This is what I'm going to do.' I will do an album of standards. I think I'm going to try to do that with Richard Perry. We were talking about that. I don't know what's going to be on it, but I will do one. I've always wanted to do a children's album too. But how would they release it?"

HE NOT BUSY BEING BORN IS BUSY DYING

"I don't want to talk about what I've become or became because that sets people off into role playing. You can't lead people by role playing, and you can only muddle things up. So, whatever it is that I am manifests itself through what I do, what I say, not by what title I want to put on myself, or other people may want to put on me. That's why I've stayed away from all that stuff all the time. I mean, I know you can call somebody something like 'born again' and then you can dismiss that. As long as you can deal with it on a level of, like, a cartoon, you can dismiss it."

PREACHERMAN SEEKS THE SAME, WHO'LL GET THERE FIRST IS UNCERTAIN

"I've always played the guitar and sung and wrote songs. That's all I'll ever do unless there comes a time when I decided not to do it anymore and started to preach or something. But even preaching would be an extension of what I am and what I do and the music I play. People who don't play the music, who don't know what it feels like, they tend to overintellectualize what I do. They overestimate the lyrics in my songs. My stuff has always been lyrics and guitar, strumming, always. I mean, I would not make a good street poet. You put me on the stage without a guitar and I probably would hide. I feel uncomfortable in front of people without my guitar. What people have never understood is that the words were important because no one else was doing it and I broke through and I did it, but there wouldn't be the songs or the words without the guitar. To me, the guitar has always been just as important, if not more important, than the words. You see my lyrics printed in books, and to me they look silly. They don't really have the same effect because they're meant to be sung or recited in an odd kind of way. People put on a record and take out the lyrics and say, 'What's he saying?' and they kind of listen to what is being said, as if it's being spoken to them. They're waiting to hear some voice to put everything in perspective for them. Everything's not going to be put in perspective for them."

"People who have lived through the fifties and the sixties and the seventies and who are now living in the eighties are downright insane if they were to take all those periods seriously. There's none of them you can hang on to. People who are living in the eighties are living a different life – than they were living in the forties and the fifties and the sixties. But there are some people who don't get changed by the times. They can be living in any kind of time period, and I'm one of those people because everything gets filtered through me, and it gets filtered into the music I play. I was the same twenty, thirty years ago that I am now. My values haven't changed. Sure I've gone through lots of different things and I've learned a lot and my life isn't what it was. My life is different all the time, but my values haven't changed. There comes a time and a place for me to tell people what I've experienced or what I've learned. If I clarify it for me, and that's what I do in the songs in some kind of way, that's all I can do. I don't judge myself and I don't really judge others. I don't watch or look at what's happening, I just take it or leave it."

"When you get high and then your bubble busts and you get down low again, lower than you were when you started, you have to have values. You have to know what the great big picture is, how it operates, and it has to be busted down in simple terms because sooner or later

everybody gets to that point, and that's what makes people confused. There's too much everything, too much traffic, too much food in the supermarket, too many clothes, too many this, too much that. And there's going to be more and more of it. But I've never been caught up in that, it doesn't do anything for me. I have to make things, I have to do things. The only thing I get a kick out of is playing or performing or some kind of artistic thing. That's just the way I always have been. I don't get a kick out of nothing else. But that's okay because throughout history it's been one big mass spectator sport. I don't know. Am I making any sense? When you write a song, you always work with common things, clichés, that everybody can identify with. If you're working with something like that, then most people can understand. You always have to be in that area where everyone knows what you're talking about. But from that point you can use it how you see fit and go as deep or as shallow as you either choose to or have the talent to. The deeper you go, the fewer people who are going to go with you. There's nothing you can do about that, because in the end it's not up to you to know who you're supposed to reach. It might be one person. You know, it's true, that old saying, 'Leave all and follow me.' And it's a point not too many people can ever allow themselves to get to because they're too busy hanging out. Unless somebody has experienced that, even for a minute, you're stuck in the flesh. So everything revolves around that, what feels good, what tastes good, what looks good, what smells good. I mean, it's all like the last meal down on executioner's row. Striped candy or something."

BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

"In life, well, I mean, I feel like I fall short in just about everything. In music I can do just about what I need to do. I feel pretty calm most of the time, but then if I review my situation at all, it always seems like I'm up there walking the plank. I'm probably a driven person. I always feel like somebody's cracking the whip. Somebody or something. It's just mostly because so many things happen in my life and they're all going at the same time, but I don't know how else to live my life. I never felt like I was searching for anything. I always felt that I've stumbled into things or drifted into them. But I've never felt like I was out on some kind of prospector hunt looking for the answers or the truth. You won't find that in any of my songs. I never went to the holy mountain to find the lost soul that is supposed to be a part of me or whatever I am. I don't believe in that stuff, and I don't feel like a person has to search for anything. I feel like it's all right in front."

It is utterly dark now. Carol knocks on the door to retrieve Bob. But first he picks up a flashlight and, as he walks me to my car, says, **"I wish I could say something exciting or preposterous."** I ask him about the property, and he says something vague like, **"There are a bunch of houses here."** He tells me, **"You can call me a couple of months from now or next year or if you ever need to reach me for anything. If you ever need a quote or anything. If something's happening."** Then he says good-bye. Before I can turn on my headlights, the gate in the hedge is closed.

22 November 1985
Andy Kershaw Interview, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1053-1054.

This interview was conducted by Andy Kershaw of the BBC for showing on the UK TV program The *Old Grey Whistle Test*. It took place at a recording studio in North London where Dylan and Dave Stewart were working at the time. Due principally to the tactlessness of Kershaw, the interview was short and not particularly productive.

DS: It's just experimental really. Bob and I are just working in this empty sort of church, that's busy being changed around at the moment. The studio's being knocked down, so it's a bit derelict, but we're just messing around.

AK: What's made you come to London to work with Dave Stewart?

BD: Well, I just wanted to work with Dave.

AK: For what particular reason; what attracted you to Dave?

BD: I think he's great.

DS: (Laughing) This sounds like a marriage guidance program...

AK: Did you decide to work with Dave because you felt you'd been going wrong in the past decade?

BD: No, I think Dave understands my music, you know.

AK: Did you think you were going wrong in the past few years?

BD: Well, it's hard to get people to, you know, work in the studio that understand your music. I've had a problem with that.

AK: Have you any plans to work with Keith Richards and Ron Wood again after Live Aid?

BD: Er, well! We see each other, you know, from time to time.

AK: Were you satisfied with that performance?

BD: That particular one? No, not really. The sound was very bad. We couldn't really hear...

DS: Well, what happened there was that they didn't tell Bob that they were going to pull that curtain down in front of him, so all the monitors were behind the curtain...

BD: They set the stage up for twenty people in the back of us...

DS: Yeah, there were all these people coming on the stage and talking about singing the song *We Are The World* while he was trying to play. So it was all jumbled up. A lot of people didn't understand that.

AK: I understand that you've recorded about twenty tunes whilst you've been here in London. Are they all Dylan tunes or are some of them Dave Stewart tunes?

BD: Oh, I think they're all my tunes. No, I think we recorded one of Dave's today, didn't we?

DS: I can't remember. Well, we did it all in three days so... Well, they're all Bob's tunes. He makes them up on the spot and then we just record them as soon as he makes them up.

AK: What are you going to do with them? Are they going to come out on a record or are they just kind of demos? Are you just feeling around?

BD: Oh, I don't know. They'll probably come out on record.

That's all I have on the audio and video tapes available to me as well as in another transcript. However, Ian Woodward, writing at the time in one of his *Wicked Messenger* articles (number 946) has this to say:

I cannot guarantee the accuracy of these excerpts from the OLD GREY WHISTLE TEST interview but felt them very worthy of passing on:

AK: Has Dave had any time in your busy schedule to give you any hairdressing tips?
(No answer)
AK: How do you like London? Does Dave cook a good breakfast?
BD: I'm not staying with him.
AK: Have you been out much? Been to any gigs?
BD: No, no, I don't think so.
AK: I heard you'd been to see Feargal Sharkey.
BD: Oh yeah. I forgot that.
AK: Has Annie Lennox been here?
BD: Yeah. She was in yesterday.
AK: Did she sing?
BD: No, she just played piano.
AK: Do you get to listen to much music? Is it difficult?
BD: What, to listen to music? (laughter) **I listen to radio a bit, but few records.**
AK: Whose records do you like to listen to on a regular basis?
BD: Nobody really.

January 1986
George Negus interview for "60 Minutes", Malibu, California

Source: *Circulating tape*

Some Dylan replies are voiced over and are impossible to transcribe.

GN: The song and the phrase that people have attached to you most regularly is probably "The Times They Are A-Changin'". Do you think that they have?
BD: I don't know. I've no idea.
GN: Did you think it were at that time?
BD: I… I would have no idea of knowing.

When you do actually get to sit down and interview the man, it's a rare event indeed. In more ways than one.

BD: I don't really attach any other great importance to it, other than the fact that I do it and people show up to see me, you know.

GN: Do you think that there is a limit to the creative depths of someone like yourself? Do you think that it's possible that you could go on writing songs for as long as you're on this earth?
BD: Oh, yeah.
GN: And what about performing – is it also something that you can do?
BD: Mm-hmm. Yeah, as long as you're healthy you can perform.
GN: And how are you, healthy?
BD: Yeah, I'm feelin' alright.

GN: When I talk about Bob Dylan as a legend and a folk hero, do you really think that anybody other than yourself deserves that sort of description?
BD: I don't know anyone who calls themselves like that, you know. I know I don't.
GN: So would you say that anybody deserves that sort of label?
BD: Well, somebody maybe… um, Robin Hood. Jesse James maybe. People who are back in the history somewhere.

BD: For me, the 60's, you know, they existed, that's just a number, really.
GN: Why did they grab hold of Bob Dylan?
BD: Because the songs were different than what was being played on the radio at that time.
GN: What do you think it would be like if Bob Dylan had emerged, or tried to emerge not in the 60's, but the 80's? Do you think you would have had anything like the same impact that you had in the last twenty years?
BD: I don't think so.

GN: Why is it, do you think, that when I told people I was gonna interview you that a lot of our generation say, 'Well, maybe Dylan is a thing of the past. Maybe what he says and sings these days is nowhere near as relevant as it was then'?
BD: No, but because a lot of the stuff that I've done has been in the past, you know, but… so what?
GN: It was pretty clear what you wanted to say in the 60's. What does Bob Dylan, poet and preacher, write poetry and preach about now?
BD: It's the same message, really. It's just the people… It's not so much me that's changed. It's the crowd, you know. It's the audience. Because I'm still doing what I'm doing. You ask any of them if they still are.

GN: And 9 out of 10 they wouldn't be.

BD: I don't… I bet you'll find out that to be true, don't you think?

GN: If we talked about the 60's as a protest period, a protest decade, and the 70s, I think you said yourself once, was a period of healing after all that had gone wrong in the 60's. How would you describe the 80's?

BD: No, I've no idea. I don't really think of it. It's been hazy whatever it is…

GN: Because time is pretty irrelevant…

BD: Yeah, you know last year was '84 or '85… years go by fast, don't they?

GN: They surely do, yeah.

GN: I get the feeling that you see yourself quite differently from the way other people do. Did other people possibly have given Bob Dylan an importance that you don't necessarily like?

BD: Well, I mean I've spent more time with myself than other people do, so I would know myself better. So what I do doesn't really throw me all that much, you know.

GN: Is it possible to pinpoint exactly the way you're at at the moment, so we can get some idea of what your music…

BD: Oh no, no, I can't do that, because my songs speak for that. I usually say everything I have to say through the songs. I mean it would be pointless for me to go out and say how I feel about this and how I feel about that. I could never articulate this well.

GN: Do you think you articulate your feelings and your views about things…

BD: Mm-hmm.

GN: …much better musically than you would in any other way?

BD: Oh, not only much better, but only… the only way.

GN: Why was there a confusion for a couple of years almost and probably still going on in some part of the world and in this country particularly about whether or not you're a born-again Christian or a practicing Jew or what the hell you are?

BD: Mm-hmm. Well, people are confused about everything these days. You know. They're confused about what kind of car they drive. They just don't know what they want to do.

GN: Why do you think people have become so confused about you and religion…

BD: Well, because I'm probably on people's minds and religion's on people's minds, so they put 2 and 2 together, I don't know.

GN: Where do you think that burst of spiritual enthusiasm came from when you were actually recording albums that were genuinely gospel?

BD: Oh, I had to do those albums. They were very important and necessary for me to do.

GN: Why was that?

BD: Oh, because people needed to hear that.

GN: At that time?

BD: Oh yeah.

GN: So you think you were reflecting a feeling that was abroad in this country by picking up religion as a subject matter?

BD: Oh we have to be very careful when talk about religion, you know, because religion is more than just church.

GN: And what's yours?

BD: Mine has more to do with playing the guitar.

BD: I remember growing up with radio. It was always more exciting in some kind of way that I'd listen to the radio and be able to see it the way you saw it in your head rather than watch it on TV screen. (the rest drown in background music)

GN: So why have you – in a way – contributed to that by allowing video…

BD: No, I'm not happy about that, you know.

GN: But aren't you in a position? Surely, everyone would imagine Bob Dylan or anybody in a position to say, well, I don't want to have a video and that's it.

BD: well, yeah, it is viewing 'em. You don't have to watch 'em, but… sometimes I guess I try to get by with the few things I possibly can…

GN: It's the sound of what you're playing and the sound of the words that you're singing that's important not the way you look or what the…

BD: Mm-hmm. Yeah, that and… you know… the possibility that you're really going to fry somebody's brain.

BD: Well, I write for me, you know. And if someone else can relate to it that's their business, and if they can't that's their business, too.

GN: What, say, would be the worst of al things that can happen to Bob Dylan – he'd lost his voice and the guitar was not available to him… What would be there left of you?

BD: What would be left of me? Oh, I don't know, I guess I'd still have some people around who would understand…

January 1986
Toby Creswell Interview, US/Australia Telephone Link (Published)

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 541-546.

Whilst rehearsing at the Soundstage 41, Universal Studios, for the upcoming tour, Dylan was interviewed over the telephone by Toby Creswell. This interview, which took place early in January 1986, concentrated on the recent album and Bob's collaboration with Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers. It appeared in the Australian *Rolling Stone* on January 16th 1986. David Frickes interview which appeared in the American *Rolling Stone* the previous December was reprinted in Australia along with Creswell's interview.

There is a tape-recording of this interview which is more extensive than the *Rolling Stone* article -see next item in this volume.

The article ran as follows:

It doesn't really matter now whether Bob Dylan is a fundamentalist Christian, anymore than it mattered whether he was going to the Synagogue when he recorded *Blood On The Tracks* ten years ago. Amongst all the crucial lines that Dylan has sung one sticks out – "He not busy being born is busy dying". Dylan, of all the great creators of his generation, has been busy being born over a series of almost thirty albums, each of which has added to all that has come before.

However, there have been some constants. There has always been a sense of engagement with the external world. When Dylan gave up writing specific protest songs in 1964, he began writing songs about hypocrisy, prejudice, injustice, malice, exploitation and cruelty. Those concerns are still the subject of his songs. At the same time he was writing love songs like *Love Minus Zero / No Limit* which is a tender and complete statement of affection that is also a religious statement. Dylan has sung of both sacred and profane love throughout his career, sometimes concentrating on one, sometimes on the other. Then there was the electric bite of pure rock & roll as portrayed on *Subterranean Homesick Blues* a song that Dylan notes on the five album *Biograph* retrospective, was recorded in one take.

All these are still elements of Dylan's current work. His choice of Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers as a backing band suggests that he is still after that fire in his rock & roll. Moreover, the news that he is working with Dave Stewart of the Eurythmics suggests that he still sees himself as contemporary.

Given all of that and the quality of the last album, *Empire Burlesque*, the presence of the Heartbreakers on Dylan's Australian tour promises us an extraordinary series of concerts.

CBS has just issued the *Biograph* box set: ten sides of Dylan from *Bob Dylan* to *Shot Of Love*. It's an awesome body of work, unequalled in rock and roll, even the outtakes and the unfinished songs like *Jet Pilot*, which later became *Tombstone Blues*.

As somebody who has listened to Bob Dylan for twenty years, I jumped at the chance of an interview. But what do you say over the telephone to someone whom you have grown up with? My friend Danny said you usually talk about how the family is doing. What do you ask Bob Dylan, though?

TC: This tour you'll be playing with The Heartbreakers, the first time you've played with a band since The Band tour a decade ago. It must be good to get back to that format.

BD: We don't really know what the format is going to be yet. It's a lot easier, though, because as band members they sort of think as one person. When you put people together who've never played together before, there's so many different people; it takes years for people to play together like the Tom Petty band. We are all raised on the same sort of music.

TC: You played with The Heartbreakers for Farm Aid. You seem to have been doing rather a lot of those shows lately.

BD: These things pop up every once in a while. I don't think it'll become a regular thing. This year there seem to have been a couple of those kind of shows.

TC: It seems that these shows have become such huge events that they tend to overshadow the issues.

BD: I know what you mean. That can happen. The atmosphere is like a carnival. But by raising that kind of money, they must be getting these problems into the minds of a lot of people who wouldn't have had it on their minds before, and that's a good thing.

TC: You have said in the past that the function of art is to lead you to God. There were the three gospel albums: *Slow Train Coming*, *Saved* and *Shot Of Love*, but your last two records have taken a different slant.

BD: Well it all depends where you come at it from. I come at things from different sides to get a different perspective on what it is I'm trying to focus in on. Maybe all my songs are focusing on the same thing. I don't know; maybe I'm just coming in from all sides.

TC: The difference between the gospel records and the recent stuff seems to be that earlier you were laying down the law.

BD: Every so often you have to have the law laid down so that you know what the law is. Then you can do whatever you please with it. I haven't heard those albums in quite a while; you're probably right.

TC: You have said recently that you didn't think rock & roll still existed in it's pure form, that it was no longer viable. Would you put yourself in with that?

BD: I don't think I put myself in with that category. I'm not coming up anymore, you know what I mean. I probably was speaking about the industry itself. I listen to it but mostly I don't pay much attention to modern music. It's everywhere, in places that maybe it shouldn't be. There comes a time to shut off the radio, there's a time to turn off the tube, but the way it's projected into society there's not much of a chance that you can get to do that.

There are very few people I know who play the real old-style music. When it first appeared, as I remember it, it was an escape from everything that was going on, which was mainly life, so when music came it was a direction to pull you in that was out of this myth. But now nobody wants to get pulled out of the myth because they don't recognise it as being a myth. That's what it's like here anyway. They like where they're at, they like what's going on, and music is just an extension of that, so they like it too. It's nothing different, it doesn't pull you anymore.

TC: So what's the solution?

BD: Turn it off. It's a decision people have to make. That's what the sixties and the fifties were all about. There are other ways to operate, to survive. There's got to be some type of light, some type of brightness outside of everything that you're given on a mass consumer level.

What I can see is the mass monster. I don't know what it's like in Australia, but in America it's everywhere. It's invaded your home, your bed, it's in your closet It's come real close to kicking over life itself. Unless you're able to go into the woods, the back country, and even there it reaches you. It seems to want to make everybody the same. People who are different are looked at as being a little bit crazy or a little bit odd. It's hard to stand outside of all of that and remain sane. Even outrageousness gets to be in

fashion. Anything you can think of to do, someone is going to come along and market it I think it's going to change. I don't think it can stay like this forever, that's for sure. I think it's going to change but for the moment it's hard to find anything that's really hot.

TC: *Empire Burlesque* seems a very straightforward record by comparison with some of your earlier work. Is simplicity something you are striving for?

BD: I strive for something that feels right to me. It could be a lot of different kinds of moods and phrasings, or lines that might not seem to be too connected at the time with the music They're all connected. A lot of times people will take the music out of my lyrics and just read them as lyrics. It's not really fair because the music and the lyrics I've always felt are pretty closely wrapped up. You can't separate one from the other that simply. A lot of the time the meaning is more in the way a line is sung, and not just in the line.

TC: These last few years have been very prolific for you.

BD: Yeah, I've been trying to find different things I would normally do. I feel like something might open up in the next couple of months in different areas. There's a bunch of songs I want to write that I haven't been able to get close to.. I almost know what they are but the information that I need is not really available to me so I have to go out and get it and I haven't done that I expected to have a little more of that on *Empire Burlesque* but I just didn't do it. They are the true story type things, real things that have happened that I would like to comment on. I need to talk to the people involved but I haven't followed through yet. I hope to have some of that stuff on the next album I do.

TC: Were you pleased with the way *Empire Burlesque* turned out?

BD: Yes, for what it was I thought it was really good. I think the next record is going to sound even better. I'm not too experienced at having records sound good. I don't know how to go about doing that, though I thought I got pretty close last time with Arthur Baker. I think next time, working with Dave Stewart here, the stuff we're doing has been happening a lot easier, quicker, so I think it's going to sound a lot more together than the last record.

TC: You recorded that album yourself and gave it Arthur Baker to mix?

BD: Pretty much so. I just went out and recorded a bunch of stuff all over the place and then when it was time to put this record together I brought it all to him and he made it sound like a record. Usually I stay out of that side of the finished record.

TC: Why?

BD: I'm not good at it. There are guys that don't mind sitting in the control booth for days and days. I'm just not like that; I'm a one-mix man. I can't tell the difference after that.

TC: Your music often seems to get ignored as compared with the emphasis that's placed on the lyrics, but there have been some really nice instrumental passages like *Pat Garrett and Billy The Kid*, for example.

BD: Yes, I just did a bunch of tracks with Dave Stewart that have no lyrics, and you don't even miss the lyrics, really. They're just different chord patterns that make up a melody. My records usually don't have a lot of guitar solos or anything like that on them. The vocals mean a lot, and the rhythm means a lot, that's about it.

TC: Your voice seems to have changed a lot over the years.

BD: Maybe it has, I don't know.

TC: It sounded different to me, particularly after *Street Legal* when you started using girl singers.

BD: I'm not aware of any significant difference really. I've always heard that sound (female backing) **with my music. I just hear it in there, it's just like another way of putting horns in. That sound has always been one of my favorites, just that vocal part, because I don't do anything with solo type work – it's all part of the overall effect, it's more just playing the song and getting the structure of it right. The vocal parts are like another instrument, but not a solo instrument. Apart from that, I just like the gospel sound.**

TC: Seeing the latest video and the *We Are The World* video, you seem to have less of the legend around your neck, you seem freed of the burden of being Bob Dylan.

BD: I don't think I ever carried that around except for 1974, when I did that tour with the Band. That was pretty much of a heavy tour because of the notoriety and legendary quality of the people involved. I had to step into Bob Dylan's shoes for that tour. Since that time I never thought about it. I wouldn't do half the things I do if I was thinking about having to live up to a Bob Dylan myth.

TC: Do you feel that you have been guided to where you are?

BD: You're always guided to where you are, but you have the choice to mess it up. Sooner or later, everything that goes around comes around. So, yeah, I feel like I've been guided to wherever it is I'm at right now, but I don't know whatever it is I'm supposed to be doing. I might have something else to do. I can't figure out what it would be, though, because I like doing what I do. Who's to say? There's a lot of luck involved, a lot of circumstance.

You can't do anything alone, though. You've always got to have somebody supporting you or nobody would get anywhere.

TC: Do you think that with time comes wisdom?

BD: With experience. Things don't really change, just attitudes.

TC: You've been doing videos with Dave Stewart. What do you think of the video age?

BD: I don't think much about it at all. It's not going to go away. Every place you look you're drowning in it. You can't turn on your TV without seeing music videos. It's like the unions. Unions in the early thirties were all communist organisations and now they're big business.

TC: It's got to the point where everybody seems to be using rock & roll for their own ends. In America you have politicians associating themselves with rock & roll songs.

BD: Absurd, isn't it. The rock & roll songs they're quoting from don't deserve to be quoted from like that. You couldn't do that with the early stuff, Little Richard and Chuck Berry – what politician is going to quote Chuck Berry? Who's going to quote Carl Perkins or Gene Vincent or any of those guys? It was outside then.

TC: Today it's image rather than content. People hold up an image of a star and hope to attach themselves to that image.

BD: That's absolutely correct It's destroying the fabric of our minds and all we can do is complain about it, so we just have to shut it out. You just have to cut it off and not let it get into your framework because that's the only way you're going to escape it. You can't meet it head on. You've probably got a little more space to breath over there, but here it's heavy. There's not many places you can go where you're not reminded of the current cultural ambitions of people who are on their way to be stars.

TC: When you started out you must have wanted to be a star in some way.

BD: I wanted to be a star in my own mind, I wanted to be my own star. I didn't want to be a star for people I didn't really identify with. For me what I did was a way of life, it wasn't an occupation.

TC: Has it been all it was cracked up to be?

BD: Yes and no. I'm still doing it, you know. It seems to be what I've done more years than I haven't done it, but I'm just going to keep on doing it until it runs out. Yes it was all it was cracked up to be because I never strayed from it. Maybe I would've gone down if I'd gone into being a movie star or if I'd started believing what other people said of me or if I'd started to think I was this person that everybody was talking about. I know there are a lot of people who did go down. They started believing what the newspapers said about them. I never believed it one way or another, so for me, I don't really feel much of a change. I feel very little change between now and ten years ago. I don't feel like I've traveled that far or done that much.

TC: You mentioned the unions earlier and I was thinking of the song, *Union Sundown*, on *Infidels* which is a very specific commentary. Do you still feel a need to make that type of comment?

BD: Oh yes, that comes with the territory.

TC: There seem to be two types of songs you've written, those which are here and now, and a lot that seem to focus on the eternals.

BD: Well, that's the important thing, if you lose that, you start getting into stuff that is mindless and meaningless. Usually there's a voice that goes on, there's some kind of warning point if that ever happens, but mostly what this kind of music is about is your ability to feel things. That's a lot of stuff going on that you hear that you know nobody felt nothing about; you can hear it in the spirit. So much stuff gets thrown at you with no feeling behind it because nobody feels anything anymore.

But there's a lot of good things going on that I don't understand. A lot of music that's coming out is way beyond me. There are some people who are really gifted musicians, I mean in a classical sense, and they're coming out with a lot of different stuff that is being thought out and pre-planned.

TC: There does seem to be an attempt by people, like Miami Steve on the *Sun City* record to say things about apartheid and about what is happening in America today.

BD: Yes, he's highly committed to that.

TC: It seems like a very difficult struggle.

BD: Well, it is a very difficult struggle, because most people don't want to hear that.

TC: There's a lot of red-baiting going on again.

BD: That's been going on since the fifties.

TC: The cold war seems to be coming back.

BD: I don't think it ever went away, you know. It just lays low for a while. People need something to hate, you've got to hate something. As soon as you're old enough, people try to make you hate something or somebody. Blacks are a little easier, Communists you can't really see. The early Christians were like Communists. The Roman Empire treated the early Christians the same way as the Western World treats communists.

TC: So it doesn't really change.

BD: No, things don't, it's just got a different name on it.

TC: Your kids are grown up, now. What's the perspective like as a father?

BD: It gives you a perspective on what kids are doing. I don't think kids are any different from what they ever were, really. It's like my daddy once said, when he was twelve years old he asked his dad something and he didn't think his dad knew too much about what he was talking about. When he got to twenty five, he asked him the same question and he got the same answer and he was amazed how his father got to be so smart.

January 1986
Toby Creswell Interview, Us/Australia Telephone Link (Tape)

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 547-558.

The taped version.

TC: How does it work out, do you think?
BD: How will the show run?
TC: Yeah, I mean...
BD: We don't really know that yet. I don't really know what the format of it's going to be.
TC: Is it sort of good to get back to playing with a band as a band rather than, sort of, musicians you put together?
BD: Oh yeah, yeah, it's a lot easier, you know, because they sort of think as one person. When you're putting people together, you have so many different people, er, that... it takes years for people to, to be able to play together like Tom Petty's band does.
TC: That kind of empathy that you get.
BD: 'Scuse me!
TC: The kind of empathy that you get from er, just, from working together and intuition between each other.
BD: Yeah, right. We were both sort of really raised on the same music.
TC: Yeah, erm; have you... what about recording? I mean, have you been planning to record with them?
BD: Er, we don't have any plans to record.
TC: I heard that you were writing with that guy from the Eurythmics, what's his name?
BD: Dave Stewart.
TC: Yeah.
BD: We've begun writing on a bunch of stuff.
TC: Nothing, nothing definite at the moment?
BD: Er, no. We're just still... we're still working on it.
TC: Right. It's kind of interesting with the Eurythmics as well 'cause they've got... their last record had that rude kind of band sound which seems to be coming back in a way.
BD: Yeah.
TC: Yeah, 'cause I mean, like, the thing that really struck me about your earlier records was that, that you couldn't really tell, you know, like who was playing what and it didn't really matter; it was just kind of the whole feeling of the song and the session.
BD: Uh, huh.
TC: Right.
BD: Yeah.
TC: You've also been doing all those kind of Farm Aid and the Live Aid shows and everything like that. I mean, how do you sort of feel about this sort of mega rock, sort of working for ... working for... er, to raise money. I mean...
BD: Well, these things kinda pop up every once in a while, you know. I don't think it's a regular thing. Er, This year there seems to be maybe a couple of those kind of shows, but there's usually, usually something like that every so often, you know.
TC: But, er, it's sort of because this thing whereby people sort of feel that maybe, maybe it's mm... may be the event is more important than the issue. I mean...
BD: Oh yeah, yeah. I know what you mean. That can happen and the atmosphere gets sort of carnival like at times, you know. But, I don't really know, they must raise... by raising that kind of money they probably get these problems on a lot of peoples minds who wouldn't have it on their minds before, so that's a good thing.

TC: It doesn't, I mean, it also doesn't seem to be actually going to effect a hell of a lot of change really.

BD: Oh, I don't think so.

TC: No.

BD: No.

TC: Right. You once said that all art should lead to God, right? And your... you did those gospel albums and your later records have sort of gone away from that... I mean, do you still think that that is the cause?

BD: Well, you know, it depends where you're coming at it from. I just... I just come at things from so many different sides that, er... whatever... whatever side I'm coming out of, I'm coming at it and... er... it's just a different perspective on, on what it is I'm trying to focus in on, you know? Maybe all my focusing in is on the same thing. I don't know. Maybe I'm just coming in from different sides all the time.

TC: It seems to me that the difference between, erm, *Slow Train* and *Saved* and the records that came after that was that, er, not that the message was particularly dramatically different but rather that instead of kind of laying down the law, it was... the later records kind of gave pointers, sort of. It was like, umm...

BD: Well, you know, every so often you have to have a law laid down so that you know what the law is. You know what I mean? Then you can do whatever you please with it, but, um... er... I don't know. I haven't listened to those albums in quite a while but, er... you're probably right on that.

TC: I was also thinking about the film *Renaldo & Clara* that you did a long time ago and, mm, I mean, the sheer sort of the length and the structure of the film was, I think, put a lot of people off. But I remember reading somebody saying at the time that the thing they liked best about it was... it was what it was, it was, you know, three and a half hours or whatever, um, and that it wasn't kind of reduced simply to fit into the kind of, the modern format to kind of provide some easy answers and happy endings and stuff like that.

BD: No. It wasn't that type of film. It was... I don't know what kind of film it was. I don't know if there's a category for it. You know, that might have been one of the problems with it.

TC: Right..

BD: You know, things usually have to follow some kind of category and it wasn't... it just didn't seem to fit anybody's idea of what a movie should be.

TC: But looking at the kind of... I mean... we get sort of a selection of stuff that comes out of America from films and music and television out here and the thing that seems to come through is that everything these days seems to be really kind of formulaised and also there seems to be this real desire to have happy endings. I mean, in the sixties, films didn't have happy endings. They were sort of meant to, meant to make you kind of, er, leave, leave the theatre feeling, feeling a bit... maybe not confused but having to think about things.

BD: Yeah. Oh... I don't know with movies they made... I can't remember any from the sixties, er... that were, you know, that kind of moved me one way or other. There probably have been some but I don't remember any. I remember some from the fifties, but, er... Yeah, you know, I guess everybody likes to have a happy ending, you know? I don't blame anybody for that. I like to see happy endings myself. You know? It's... but... sometimes it doesn't work out that way.

TC: Mm. Do you, do you sort of see your band... I mean, I've seen a couple of things that you've said lately, where you've said that you didn't think that rock n' roll was really still, urn, viable or that rock n' roll still existed. I mean, would you sort of put yourself in that kind of category?

BD: No, er... I don't think I put myself in that kind of category, but I'm not coming up any more, you know, I mean, er, I don't know... I probably was speaking about the industry itself, you know what I mean?

TC: Yeah.
BD: Uh, it's, like, er... Could you hang on for a second?
TC: Do I wanna hang up for a second? Sure.

Short pause

BD: What were we talking about, now?
TC: You were talking about modern music.
BD: Oh yeah. I listen to it but mostly I don't I mean, modern music... it's everywhere, you know, like it's everywhere in places where maybe it shouldn't be. I mean, there comes a time to shut off the radio, you know.
TC: Yeah.
BD: There's a time to turn off the tube and there's a time to, you know, to stop listening to it, to all of it, and, er, with the way it's projected into society now there's not much of a chance that you could get to do that so you can't really get to think about it much.
TC: Right.
BD: And then everything is formulised, you know... There are some people I know who play like real old, you know, style of music but they're an exception, you know.
TC: Yeah.
BD: Now there just doesn't seem to be... it's not maybe fashionable or marketable, or... I don't know. You know... it's... when it first appeared as I remember, it was more of an escape, you know, from everything that was going on. You know, everything that was been going on was just lies everywhere. So when the music came on it was, it was er, a direction to pull you in that was out of this mess, you know?
TC: Yeah.
BD: But now, nobody wants to get pulled out of the mess because they don't recognise it as being a mess. I mean that's the way it's like here anyway.
TC: Right.
BD: Right, they like where it's at. They like what's going on. So music is just an extension of that They like that too. It doesn't, it's not, it's nothing different, its... it doesn't pull you anywhere, it's just into your, into your, er... daily walk through life. Do you follow me?
TC: Yeah. I can see what you mean. Um, do you, you've also always, like, I mean your music has always gone through changes. When you've gone out on tour you've played all material completely differently, like the last time you came to Australia. I mean, do you sort of think, do you sort of see the songs as becoming better or just changing, or... or what?
BD: Oh, they sort of... the song remains the same, you know.
TC: But, despite the arrangement and despite the instrumentation and stuff...
BD: Yeah, I think so.
TC: Yeah, I mean, looking at your 29 albums or something, they seem to me to sort of run together like a whole series of movies almost, rather than, rather than being bits of an autobiography, they kind of seem to reflect a particular time... each one reflects a particular time and a particular place.
BD: Yeah... they probably do.
TC: I got the impression that you don't usually just hang on to a big back catalogue and just re-record it and stuff like that.
BD: Erm, what was that?
TC: I got the impression, I get the impression, that you don't sort of hang on to a big back catalogue. I mean, when you go to make a record, you have a few songs of that period rather than sort of...
BD: Yeah, right I seldom listen to my own stuff though, er... I usually try to do something new all the time, you know, when I'm making a record.

TC: Right, erm... I mean, do you think that your... that your talkin' about how people didn't wanna be pulled out of the mess and stuff? I mean, do you think it's possible that anybody can do that?

BD: Oh yeah, if you cut yourself off. If you just, you know, turn it off, you know, you've gotta just turn it off. It's a decision that people have to make. You have to turn it off, you know? Like that, that's what, er, that's what the sixties or the fifties were all about... I don't know, you know... erm... there are other ways to, to operate, you know and to be... and to survive, and, erm... that's gotta be some type of light, you know, some type of... some type of brightness outside everything that's... that you're given on a mass consumer type level, you know?

TC: Yeah.

BD: And, and it's like... from where I can see, what's happened is that this mass monster, whatever it is... I don't know what it's like in Australia, but, in America, it's everywhere. I mean, it's invaded your home, you know, it's in your bed, it's in your closet, it's come real close. It's just taking over life itself, you know. Like, if you go out into the woods and into the back country, erm... and even there it reaches, you know? So, it seems to wanna make itself all of one thing. It wants everybody to be the same, you know. People who are different, they are looked at as being kind of crazy or a little bit odd; do you know what I mean?

TC: Yeah, sure.

BD: And, er, it's hard to, it's hard to stand outside of all that and remain sane.

TC: It seems a bit like the music of the fifties, a kind of everything being homogeneous and everybody kind of feeling that they have to toe the line and um, not be too outrageous, or if...

BD: Well, I mean, even outrageousness, you know, gets to be in fashion.

TC: Yeah.

BD: Anything you can think of to do, someone's gonna come along and market it.

TC: Right.

BD: Whatever it is, I don't know. I think it's gonna change. I don't think it's gonna stay the way it is forever. That's for sure. I think it's going to change into something else, you know, but, as for the moment, it's hard to find anything that's hot, you know?

TC: But there' just a huge amount of money tied up in it.

BD: Yeah, there's... probably more than anybody knows even.

TC: Mm... urn... what was I gonna say? Some of your songs have seen more... some of your songs seem incredibly direct and sort of really obvious and some of them seem sort of kinda quite the opposite. I mean, some of them are very impenetrable. Do you sort of strike for directness, or, I mean, is it something that doesn't matter to you much?

BD: Well, I strike for something that feels right to me. Er, like I said, it could be, er... a different... a lotta different kinds of er, mood or phrasings, or... lines that might not seem to be too connected at the time but with the music they're all connected, you know, like, a lot of times people will take out my lyrics and they'll take the music out of them and they'll just read 'em as lyrics, you know. And that's not really fair, because... er, the music and the lyrics, I've always felt, are pretty closely wrapped up and I don't think one... you can't separate one from another that simply. So... a lot of times it's not in the line, maybe, the line is sung. You know what I mean?

TC: Yeah.

BD: I mean, there might be more meaning in the way the line is sung. You could take a line and it might be a line which is... seems to be very positive, and you can sing it in a way which seems to be very negative, or vice-versa, you know?

TC: Right.

BD: I don't... I'm not really conscious of that when I'm doing it. It just comes out the way it comes out.

TC: Yeah. I was just wondering, I mean, you have, you've been in this game for, like, a long time, right, like thirty years almost, maybe, and, erm, I suppose, I mean, how much do you approach the possibility... the task of improving your craft, or do you see it in that way. I mean do...

BD: Oh yeah, all the time. Yeah, I'm always studying on it, you know. Um, there's just a lot... there's... it's bottomless, it's bottomless, you know, it's... there's no end to it, er... I'll probably never get to do all the stuff that I wanna do that I feel I'm capable of doing... lyrically. There's just all kinds of different ways to go about things. I've just got, you know, I've just er... I'm really at the surface really.

TC: Yeah. Do you still get the satisfaction out of live performance that you did... that you did when you first started out, like performing, particularly performing with an electric band?

BD: Well. When it's right, you do, yeah. And when it's not right, you don't, um. I don't like bad nights any more than anybody else, you know?

TC: Right.

BD: But... the good nights make up for all the bad nights.

TC: Do you, um, do you... you've been working very hard for the last couple of years as well. I mean, it seems to have been a very creative period or a very...

BD: Yeah. I have been. I've been doing... I've been just doing... I've been trying to find different things though that are kind of like offshoots of what I normally would do, you know, um, and I feel something might open up in the next couple of months, I don't know, in different areas, you know?

TC: Yeah.

BD: But...

TC: How does it, um... I mean, your kids are pretty well grown up now.

BD: Yeah, they are.

TC: Do... well, how much of a perspective does that give you, I mean, being a father as well as being a...

BD: Well, er, it gives you perspective on what, you know, kids are doing, but the kids don't seem... I don't think they're any different than they were... than they ever are really.

TC: No. But I just wonder, I just wonder how, I mean surely it must affect the way you approach your art. I mean, seeing... seeing a family.

BD: Well, you know, it's like... it's like my daddy once said, you know. It's like when he was, er... when he was, er... twelve years old or something he... he asked his dad something and, er, he didn't think his dad knew... knew too much about what he was talking about. And, then when he got to be 25, he asked him the same thing and he said, you know, he gave him the same answer and, er, you know, he was amazed that his father got to be so smart, you know.

TC: Right. You also, in the last few years, or quite a few years ago now, I suppose, before Infidels. I mean, your... up through the 70's you had seemed to be something more than just another pop singer and you get a lot of flak for those albums that you did in that period. I mean, has that... was that, um... it seemed also to clear the air a bit, when one sees you on TV or one hears your records. You don't seem to be carrying around that burden of having to be Bob Dylan. So if you have...

BD: Yeah, well, I don't think I ever carried that burden around except maybe one tour in '74.

TC: Yeah.

BD: And when I did that tour with the Band I think I was pretty much of a heavy burden from tour, you know, because... because of the notoriety and the legendary quality to it... there wasn't any. I had to be, I had to step into Bob Dylan's shoes, you know?

TC: Right.

BD: But since that time I never thought about it, er... I wouldn't do half the things I do if I was thinking about, er... having to live up to a Bob Dylan tour or Bob Dylanness, you know.

TC: Perhaps it's just our, my perception of it... as being, well, my perception of your persona. Do you think also that, um... I mean, do you think that basically that your life has been pretty much, um, a process of, of, of positive learning? I mean, do you think that, that, that you have been guided to where you are now or is it just, um, a mixture of good luck and misfortune?

BD: Well, yeah. You know? I, er, you're always guided to where you are but you can, you have, you have the choice to mess it up, you know.

TC: Yeah.

BD: And, um, sooner or later everything that goes wrong comes round, so... yeah, I feel that I've been guided to wherever it is I'm at right now, and I don't know what it is I'm really supposed to do. I might have something else that I'm supposed to do. I... I can't figure out what it would be though, um, 'cause I like doing what I do and, er... you know, who's to say... there's a lot of luck involved, there's a lot of... you know, just a circumstance involved too.

TC: Being in the right place?

BD: Yeah, at the right place. Being there at the right time and knowing the right people and having the... you know? I mean, you can't do anything alone, you know?

TC: Yeah.

BD: You always have to have somebody that's supporting you. Nobody'd get anywhere if they didn't.

TC: Um, I think I've sort of run out of questions... Are you planning to tour after Australia?

BD: Oh, I've got to have another record out by June, so I'm gonna be working hard on that, er, after this particular tour. And then I don't know. Maybe in the summertime. Maybe in the early Summer I'll tour... I'll do some tour, yeah.

TC: There are a lot of... um... a lot of songs on *Empire Burlesque*... why is that... is that just the one... the way there was a...

BD: Yeah, they're just... I don't know, it turned out that way. There's a bunch of songs that I want to write that I haven't been able to get close to at the moment There's songs I almost have to go out and... I know, I know what they are and... but the information that I need is not really available to me so I have to go out and get it and I haven't done that. Um, I expected to have a little bit more than that on *Empire Burlesque* but I just, I just didn't do it Er, there's a type of songs and situations like true story type things that, that... real things that have happened where I would like to comment on these things and I need to talk to the people involved and I haven't followed through on some of that stuff. I hope to have some of that something like that on the next album I do.

TC: Were you sort of pretty happy with the way *Empire Burlesque* turned out?

BD: Yeah, for what it was. I thought it was, I thought it was, er, I thought it was really good, you know? Um, I think the next record's gonna sound even better though because I've been, I've been not too experienced at having records sell good and I don't know who... how to go about doing that and I thought, I thought I got pretty close last time with Arthur Baker. I think the next time, though, working with Dave Stewart here, the stuff we're doing has been happening a lot easier, quicker. So I think it's going to sound even more, more together than the last record.

TC: With Arthur Baker, did you sort of put down the tracks and give them to him to mix?

BD: Yeah. Yeah.

TC: Right. What you, you put them down pretty much live?

BD: Ah, yeah, pretty much so... I just went in and recorded a bunch of stuff all over the place and then when it was time to put this record together I just brought it all to him, you know?

TC: Yeah

BD: And we sat down and he made it sound like a record.

TC: Yeah, it's very difficult...

BD: Usually, er, usually, er, I stay out of that side of the record, of the finished record whatever it is, you know?

TC: Why?

BD: Well, it gets... I'm not good at it, erm. There are guys who don't mind sitting in the control booth for days and days, you know, we're in the studio and I'm just not like that. I can't... I'm one mix... I can't tell the difference between 'em, you know?

TC: Do you think it makes better records working that way?

BD: Yeah, oh yeah, the way records are mixed. You could take a record and mix it a hundred different ways, you know?

TC: No, but I mean, do you think like doing thousands and thousands of takes of different solos – do you think that makes a record better or... I mean, I personally...

BD: Well my records, solos don't mean that much.

TC: No.

BD: Oh the vocals, the vocals mean a lot and the rhythm means a lot and, er, that's about it, you know?

TC: Yeah. Your voice has changed really dramatically as well like over the years. I mean...

BD: Has it really?

TC: Yeah. It sounds to me completely different.

BD: Well, you mean from the early days.

TC: Well just over the, over the, yeah. All the time it changes.

BD: Oh yeah, yeah. Maybe it does. I don't know.

TC: I know... I don't know whether that's the way it's recorded now or whether it's, it's erm, it's just the way you are, I mean, you get old I suppose.

BD: Yeah.

TC: I guess one of the weird things for people of... for musicians of your generation is that you're the first generation to really have to grow old, old, with pop music. If you know what I mean?

BD: Well, there's some people from the fifties still around.

TC: But not many people from the fifties are still kind of writing new material and sort of pushing...

BD: I don't think Chuck Berry has written a song in years, or Carl Perkins either. Carl Perkins, he's still around but I don't think he's written anything either.

TC: I mean, when you started out... it was teenage music and you were teenagers or just after and to, to go through that process of trying to find something that makes sense to you, when you have to put all the teenage things aside.

BD: Yeah... Oh boy... I don't know... like I...

TC: It's not a question.

BD: Yeah. I know what you mean. To me it seems like such a long time ago and then on the other hand it just seems like the other day, you know.

TC: Yeah, sure.

BD: I mean, it's just a... time's got a way of just rolling on, you know... affects you and don't affect you.

TC: Do you think that with time comes wisdom?

BD: Well, with experience, you know.

TC: Yeah.

BD: Er, because, it's er, things don't really change, it's just attitudes that change, you know?

TC: Yeah, sure. Do you also think that maybe it's necessary to erm, to experience everything?

BD: Ummm. No, I don't think so. I don't see, I don't know what the point of it all would be, you know, I mean, there's... don't know.

TC: If not everything, I mean, do you think... I mean, going through the kind of temptations and the craziness and stuff, like, that surround, that surround being in a band.

BD: In a band?

TC: Well being a successful pop star... being in the public eye and, I guess, I guess, just going ... going through the kind of temptations that are offered to you.

BD: Yeah, well those are like... those are like... when you're young you know and you've never seen it before, it's exciting, but you can't keep going that way, because er, um, you're just not strong enough to... to make the stage, you know, or to go out, to go out on the road as if you're in a play pen or something, you know?

TC: Yeah.

BD: Because you do have to work (laughter)**. If you didn't have to work, I guess it'd be alright, I guess, but, but it takes a lot out of you to... succumb to all of those temptations.**

TC: Yeah. When I was talking about your voice changing... I think also one of the things that seemed to make a little difference was all those years of singing with girls.

BD: Oh yeah.

TC: From 78 on, or whatever it was.

BD: Yeah, I don't know. I mean.. Do you think it's changed that much? I can't really tell. I'm not really aware of it, if it is. I'm not sure if there's any significant difference really. But, I have always heard, you know, that sound with my music.

TC: Yeah.

BD: I just hear it in there. It's like... it's like it's just another exten... it's just another way of putting horns in, you know?

TC: Yeah.

BD: That sound has always been one of my favorite sounds. It's just that... that vocal part and, I mean... because I don't do anything with soloistic type work. You know what I mean?

TC: Yeah.

BD: Like... in the band, there's never any guitar player that... that's, that's solo is going to be, you know... part of the overall effect. You know what I mean?

TC: Yeah.

BD: Oh. It's more than just playing the song, you know? It's getting... getting the structure of it down right and the vocal parts are like another instrument, but they're not a soloistic instrument.

TC: Yeah, yeah...

BD: Oh, and just besides that, I mean, I just like the sound. I just like to hear, you know, gospel-type girl sounds.

TC: Right. It's something that um... it's something er... that seems to get really quite lost when people talk about your work, is the music, actually. I mean, they, even stuff like the *Pat Garrett* sound track. I mean there's some great, there's some great pieces of music on that without any words at all.

BD: Oh, well, you know, I just.. we just did a bunch of tracks... I just did a bunch of tracks with Dave Stewart and, er, you know, there's no lyrics on 'em. Like, you know, you don't even miss the lyrics, really. Just musically like they're... they're like just different chord patterns that seem to make up a melody, you know what I mean?

TC: Yeah. The stuff that you did with Dave Stewart, was that just the two of you or was that...

BD: Err, it was in his... he's got a studio in London. No, it wasn't just two of us, there was a er... we also had a drummer and a bass guitar player and a keyboard player.

TC: Right. Um... yeah. How do you still feel about videos, these days?

BD: Well, I don't really have any, much of a feeling on them um... they're... I'm, not really an expert in that area on videos... they're... they're probably here to stay for sure, you know and, er... it's just another way to sell records really.

TC: Yeah. Do you think...

BD: But that's more about what I was saying about, every place you look, you know, it's just... you're just... you're drowning in it, you know? I mean, you can't turn on your TV without seeing videos, I mean, here, you know what I mean, it's just everywhere.

TC: It's sort of... I mean pop music now or rock 'n' roll music is now the main culture in our society. Where once it was sort of an outlaw thing in ours, it's just everywhere.

BD: Yeah, well, it's become that, you know?

TC: I think the... well, I think...

BD: It's just like the unions, you know. Unions are the same way. In the early thirties they were all communist organisations. And now they're, you know, now they're big business in themselves, do you know what I mean?

TC: Yeah, exactly. I mean... you have politicians in the United States quoting from rock n' roll songs.

BD: Yeah. Absurd, isn't it?

TC: Yeah. It's pretty horrifying...

BD: Rock n' roll songs they're quoting from deserve, you know, to be quoted like that.

TC: Mm, sure. The um...

BD: You see, you couldn't do that with er, with all that early stuff – Little Richard, Chuck Berry – I mean, what politician's gonna quote Chuck Berry? You know?

TC: Right.

BD: Well whose gonna quote Little Richard or Elvis Presley or Carl Perkins or Gene Vincent, any of those guys? Who's gonna quote any of that? You know, it was outside then and it's outside now.

TC: Yeah, but then again there's a lot of pop... a lot of rock n' roll music that they're not gonna quote either.

BD: Oh yeah, Oh, for sure. Huh. They're only gonna quote... anybody's just gonna quote what helps their own, what serves their own self, you know?

TC: It seems to be more... it seems though to be, sort of, everything's sort of tied up with image and, I mean, then, sort of quoting from Bruce Springsteen or quoting from Bob Dylan is more, rather than actually using the words for what they mean, it's more sort of attaching themselves to an image. You know, it's like everything, particularly video sensitive, that it seems to make... make an image or an icon of people or of works and you just sort of grab hold of it and stick it in front of you and "this means something to me".

BD: That's absolutely correct and that's why I say you've just gotta turn it off because if, because if all we can do... if all we can do is just complain about it and that it's, you know, destroying the fabric of our minds, then we just have to shut it off, you know? We just have to, we just have to, just er... cut it off where it is and, and er, not get it into, into your framework, you know, because that's the only other way you're gonna escape it. You, you, you can't meet it head-on, because it's there, you know?

TC: Yeah. You can just learn how to deal with it.

BD: Right, right.

TC: How to see things properly.

BD: I imagine that you've probably got a little more space to breathe there where you are, but it's, you know, but over here it's... it's heavy. But, you're gonna hear... there's only places you can go without being reminded of... you know, of current cultural musical ambitions of people who are on their way to be stars.

TC: Yeah. When you started out and you wanted to be a star... did you want to be a star?

BD: I wanted to be a star in my own mind, you know? I wanted to be my own star.

TC: Right.

BD: I didn't wanna care to be a star for people that I really didn't identify with anyway.

TC: Yeah.

BD: For me, it was just, er... it was a way of life, it wasn't er, er...

break in tape

er... at the moment will do, er... but, the most... that's the important thing. If you lose that then you just start giving in to er... just sort of stuff which is kind of mindless and meaningless, you know and er, usually there's a little something, there's a little, you know... there's a voice that goes on, you know – there's a, some kind of warning point if that ever happens. Um, but mostly what, what this kind of music is all about is just a pull for you to feel things.

TC: Yeah.

BD: There's a lot of stuff going on which you hear that you know nobody's felt nothing about and you can hear it in the spirit, you know? Like when you, when you... watch so much stuff which is thrown at you. There's no feeling behind it because there's nobody that feels anything any more. The danger and all that stuff has just wiped out everybody's feelings about everything.

TC: Yeah. Do you think, do you think it's a conscious attempt to do that or it's just a... it's just a by-product?

BD: I think it's a spiritual attempt, you know. If you put, if you put erm, headlines in the paper, you know, that there were forty John Does found in the morgue, you know, and there was no identification, no next of kin – if you put that in the paper enough times it'll blow your... it won't register with people any more.

TC: Yeah. Do you, urn, do you think it's worse now than it was. I mean, when the Beatles were around, there were the Beatles and the Animals and there were the great people but there were also like, you know, I mean, plenty of schlock around as well.

BD: Yeah. Yeah, there was just always a lot of that around, er...

TC: It's just the percentage is more now.

BD: Er.. yeah, because maybe the present... I don't know what... but there is a lot of good things going on which I don't understand. I mean, I know, like, a lot of this stuff which is coming out musically is way beyond, erm.. way beyond me. Some of these people, you know, who are, are really gifted musicians, I mean in a classical sense, you know. You're hearing a lot of different stuff, you know that, that, that's been thought out and pre-planned, er... it's just a different picture now, you know, it's like, there's like everything is just kinda... it's just kinda existing on it's own level... there's nobody really got a handle on it, you know?

TC: Yeah.

BD: I mean, there's new... I guess there's new categories and stuff coming out every day because people still need categories. But, what meaning they have is highly debatable, you know?

TC: Yeah. You have those records... I just got that *Sun City* record the other day which is kind of... erm... I mean it's a sort of an attempt, I suppose, to cut through the kind of, the crap. It seems to me to be a remarkably sort of non, non-image kind of record.

BD: Oh yeah.

TC: And there does, there does seem to be an attempt by people like Miami Steve to kind of say things about what's happening in America today.

BD: Yeah. He's highly committed to that.

TC: But it seems like it's an incredible struggle.

BD: Well it is an incredible struggle because, you know, erm... most people, I guess, just don't wanna hear that.

TC: There seems to be a lot of like, red-baiting going on as well. Like people being accused of being communists and sympathising with communists and stuff.

BD: Oh, that's been going on since the fifties.

TC: But the cold war seems to be coming...

BD: Uh?

TC: The cold war seems to be coming back.

BD: The what?

TC: The cold war seems to be coming back.

BD: Yeah. I don't think it ever went away, you know? Erm... it's just... laid low for a while.

TC: Yeah.

BD: But people, people need something to hate, you know? You gotta hate something. I mean, that's... it's like er... as soon as you're old enough they try to make you hate something or somebody.

TC: Yeah. Whether they be communists or blacks... or anything else.

BD: Blacks are a little bit easier than communists. Communists you can't really see. Communist is what... I mean... is a person, like... well, you know, the early Christians were like communists.

TC: Right.

BD: But they did the same things in the Roman Empire – treated the Roman Christians the same way as the Western world treats the communists.

TC: Yup. So it doesn't really change, does it?

BD: No, I don't think so. It's just got a different name on it.

TC: Yeah.

BD: I'm not saying that communists are today's Christians by any means, but, you know, I mean, there's always, there's always some... there's always, there's always someone that, that you're told you've gotta step on so you can rise up a little higher.

TC: Yeah. OK.

BD: OK?

TC: OK.

BD: Well, maybe I'll get to see you when we get over there.

TC: Yeah. OK.

BD: OK.

TC: See you around. Bye-bye.

BD: Bye.

January 1986
Congratulations To Willie Nelson, Los Angeles, California

Source: *Circulating tape*

Bob Dylan's congratulation speech to Willie Nelson, when he got the First Annual Award Of Appreciation for his work for humanitarianism, e.g. Farm Aid. The award was presented 27 January 1986. Broadcast by ABC-TV network the same day.

It's not a bad thing to have a good idea. It is a better thing to take a good idea and do something about it. That's just what you did, Willie. You took time off of a busy career , you put a lot of energy and money. You asked a lot of friends to help out and they did. You made "Farm Aid" a reality. For this the music business thanks you, I thank you, the American farmers thanks (sic!) **you. You deserve this award, Willie, congratulations!**

26 January 1986
Don McLeese interview for *Chicago Sun-Times*

Source: *Chicago Sun-Times*, "Show" section, 26 Jan 1986, p. 8

ASK HIM SOMETHING, AND A SINCERE DYLAN WILL TELL YOU THE TRUTH
by Don McLeese

LOS ANGELES "**You got any questions for me? I love to talk,"** said Bob Dylan, as he motioned me toward the piano for a chat after rehearsal. He seemed sincere, even friendly, if a little guarded.

There was a time when hearing Dylan say he loved to talk would have been as surprising as hearing Mike Ditka say he loved to lose, or Elvis Presley confiding that he loved to diet. An interview with Bob Dylan offered the same prospects for congeniality as a Sean Penn photo session. Twenty years ago, Dylan's dealings with the press ranged from cryptic to combative. As the "*Don't Look Back*" documentary made plain, he didn't suffer fools gladly, and he seemed to find signs of foolishness everywhere. From behind his dark glasses, he preferred to let his lyrics – his parables and paradoxes, his amphetamine-fueled flights of surrealism – speak for themselves. He seemed like a hard man.

The Dylan that I encountered was far softer – a softer handshake, a softer demeanor – than I had expected. Maybe now that people aren't prying so much into his personal life – remember the self-proclaimed "Dylanologist" who dedicated himself to sifting through Dylan's garbage for revelations? – so maybe he can allow himself to be a little more open. Maybe religion or age or both have mellowed him a little. Maybe he tired of inventing and shedding new skins, new shields, new identities. Maybe he is simply more willing these days, in light of his declining commercial impact, to meet his audience halfway.

Whatever the case, Dylan's lyrical approach has become more straightforward in recent years, and his personal manner seems more open as well. The man who once sang "*Don't ask me nothin' about nothin', I just might tell you the truth*," had asked me if I had any questions. And he seemed to mean it. And, yeah, I had some.

Why New Zealand, Australia and Japan, rather than the long-awaited return to Stateside touring?

"I've never been offered that much here in the States," he said with a laugh. **"There's really very little reason for most of the stuff I do. There's not very much logic behind it. I haven't been in Australia since '78 or so."**

Why the Heartbreakers?

"This just kinda fell into place for me," he said. **"Mutual friends I know. It just happened. It wasn't like I woke up one morning and decided that I wanted to work with a particular band."**

The band's guitar-and-keyboard sound reflects the enduring influence of Dylan's "*Highway 61 Revisited*"/"*Blonde on Blonde*" period, and the fact that the Heartbreakers would interrupt their own projects for a chance to tour with Dylan suggests that his stature in musical circles hasn't diminished with the passage of time. With the exception of Elvis Presley, it is hard to imagine another artist who has so completely reshaped the face of popular music in his own image.

When he turned to rock, his impact was so profound that it was impossible to ignore. Not only did he radically transform what was being sung, but he also revolutionized how it would be sung. Just listen to John Lennon singing "*Norwegian Wood*" or Mick Jagger singing "*She Smiled Sweetly*," and you'll hear imitation Dylan. Just listen to the Four Tops' "*Reach Out (I'll Be There)*," and you'll hear Dylan in the way Levi Stubbs phrases the lyric.

A few years later, when glitter was the vogue in England, both David Bowie and Marc Bolan penned odes to the master. Bruce Springsteen reportedly drew the blueprint for his early

career from a biography of Dylan, and took his music to the same man who had signed Dylan to Columbia Records.

Among the best of today's new bands, Dylan's influence stretches from Jason and the Scorchers to Mike Scott and the Waterboys. Few producers these days are hotter than the Eurythmics' Dave Stewart, who felt privileged to collaborate with Dylan on a recent video and tracks for his next album. And what are such socially conscious efforts as Live Aid, Farm Aid and "*Sun City*," but the reflowering of the seeds sown by Dylan in the early '60s? Although the five-record "*Biograph*" set should reinforce the breadth and depth of Dylan's accomplishments for a new generation of listeners, there's no question that his commercial impact has diminished as the quality of his recorded work has become more erratic. Does it bother him to be away from t he forefront of popular consciousness?

"Not really," Dylan said. **"I mean, I've done what I wanted to do, and I really can't complain. Everybody gets their time to do whatever it is they're doing. You know what I mean: You gotta start out when you're young. Sometimes I forget I'm not that young."**

How important are record sales to the 44-year-old Dylan?

"At this point really not that important, because of my contract. But in the future, it might be," he said. **"There's more great records that don't sell, in a real crushing sort of way: Leonard Cohen's last record was a brilliant record. John Prine's last record I thought was incredible. Lou Reed always makes a great record.**

"I've found, and I think it's true, that most people get their inspiration from records that they have to seek out, and really aren't that popular. I know that's the way it was with me. Whether it was folk music or rhythm and blues or rock 'n' roll, it wasn't that popular when we were growing up. You really had to be dedicated to seek that out, and make that a part of your life." Of course, where the music that initially attracted Dylan represented an outsider's voice of expression – raw, vital, unpolished – much of what has passed for rock in recent years has been a triumph of mainstream merchandising. Little wonder that a man who never sang a song the same way twice has seemed increasingly uncomfortable in an era of rhythm-machine rigidity and frozen video images.

"I definitely think and believe that the popular music of today, it's not gonna work," Dylan said. **"Because there's not really substance behind it. There's a lot of machines and a lot of riffs, and people are going to get tired of it, if they're not tired already."**

When he's playing with people who once idolized him – or still do – is there any sense of intimidation that he has to dissolve?

"When they see what I'm about, you know it's all about being able to follow what I'm doing and stick with that," he said. **"It really doesn't amount to any kind of intimidation. Maybe I might play with somebody who's really young, and they're kinda shaky, but then you have to encourage those people to play.**

"When I play, people can play around what I play. I give people a lot of space."

Although Heartbreaker keyboardist Benmont Tench says that Dylan is an easy artist to work with, he remembered his initial experiences for the "*Shot of Love*" sessions.

"The first day that I worked with him, he didn't say a word the whole session, and I didn't know anybody at the session," he said. "At the end of the day, when I was leaving, he said, 'Can you come tomorrow?' "

At that point, Tench figured that he probably had done all right.

3 February 1986
Auckland airport, Brief comments to press

Source: *Circulating tape.*

Two unwillingly given comments to the press:

BD: I just love to fly.
and
BD: We'll see you later, you know.

7 February 1986
Stuart Coupe interview, Regent Hotel, Auckland, New Zealand

Source: *Internet*

Not a complete interview, just one snippet –

A surprise inclusion in the live set-list has been Dylan's song about Lenny Bruce. As the song suggests, Dylan confirmed that they did catch a cab together once.

"Yeah, I saw him perform in the early sixties, around 1963, before he got caught up in all that legal stuff," Dylan said. **"He's someone who's never really been attributed the respect he deserves for what he did and the influence he had on so many people. Guys like Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy, they owe such a huge debt to him but no one makes the same fuss about him as they do about all those other guys that died before they should have."**

10 February 1986
Press Conference in Brett Whitley's Studio, Sydney, Australia

Source: *The Rolling Telegraph Supplement* #1, p.23; #2, p. 17

Dylan in conference
Juke's Murray Engelheart (tape-recorder) and Bob King (cameras) joined the jostling throng as The Zim gave his only Australian press conference

The narrow, roughly paved back streets of Surry Hills in Sydney was a strangely apt, though unusual, environment in which to cross paths with a living legend.

There was a distinct air of tension and anticipation is the expansive studio of artist Brett Whitley. Hardened industry persons shifted uncomfortably, nature which position to take.

Approximately 15 minutes late. It was announced that "Mr Dylan" would be arriving soon, and photographers had 30 seconds to take their shots. Then, in he strolled, to the deafening overture of a multitude of clicking cameras and the awe-filled murmurs of those present. Dylan positioned himself on the leather lounge, hands together, eyes raised, tolerating the adulation. The photographers' curfew was firmly enforced.

Dylan seemed relatively at ease, his customary leather jacket and bike boots complemented by a shirt undone to his waist. He looked tired but, after all, this is Bob Dylan.

Contrary to the *Sixty Minutes* fiasco, Dylan displayed a kaleidoscope of moods: warm, humble and humorous. The razor tongue that was the terror of interviewers year ago has been replaced with the patience of a world-weary man who has humbly seen it all and inspired most of it.

The man had a spiritual calm about him, almost an aura. Despite the fact his Christianity concerns are now back between the lines as they were prior to his seventies' public spirituality, this is still, without a doubt, the man whose heart poured out the majestic prayer, "I Believe In You" from *Slow Train A'Coming*, although the fire-breathing rock'n'roller is making a resurgence.

The questions came thick and fast from dozens of media reps and hangers on. Some just stood and listened in awe. Although reluctant to give opinions on some subjects, which he countered with a three or four word response, Dylan fielded most questions in a slow, thoughtful manner, though at times translation was difficult.

On his high profile recently and the Live Aid and Farm Aid experiences.

"Live Aid and Farm Aid were pretty good causes I guess."

His involvement in those projects.

"As much as anyone else that was there."

Did imitators flatter him?

"It's… it's… it's flattering."

On his visit to Moscow last year.

"I was invited by a poet, Yevgeny Yevtushenko. He invited me to a poetry convention."

Was he surprised at how much that country knew about him?

"The particular show I did was only for a certain type of people."

Did he see himself as a poet?

"I don't know, compared to whom? I don't really put my stuff next to Byron or Keats. I don't think my stuff stands up too well on paper next to that."

Why Australia with Tom Petty?

"Why? Because of the money."

In the video of "*Tight Connection To My Heart*" he looked uncomfortable at times.

"All the time." Laughs.

Did he hate every minute of it?

"Yeah." (Grins)

Are videos a necessary evil?

"Not any more than anything else."

Such as?

"Like anything."

Also looking uncomfortable in *"We Are The World"*.

"To tell you the truth, I don't remember that I did as best as I could."

The reason for the popularity of monstrous music?

"There is so much mediocrity going on, every time someone really good comes along it's like you can't be too good 'cause you're looked at. you stand out. People that stand out in an individual kind of way, they don't fit into the system because they don't sell, they don't keep system commodities going. I thought Peter Townshend's record was real good."

On Shyness:

"Yeah, most of the time."

On himself:

"Who's Bob Dylan? I'm only Bob Dylan when I have to be Bob Dylan. Most of the time I just be myself."

On Christianity:

"I was doing what I believed I should be doing. Most artists should do some gospel kind of music. If they don't do something with gospel, I don't really trust that artist I don't care who he is. I never considered myself to have Christian fans and non-Christian fans. I don't deal with people in that kinda way."

Impact over the years:

"I know I've had a lot of influence on people, but a lot of people have been an influence on me, too. When I started, when I was coming up. I was influenced by everybody that had formed the style I'd come up with. It's not a bad thing to be influenced by other people."

Responsibility and the Protest movement:

"That was never my intention. To be responsible, to set an example for anybody, that's not my fault."

What is believed to be the sexist overtones on *Empire Burlesque*. (Uproar from the group)

"What's a sexist album? What does that mean. Sexist, I don't know what you mean, I have never met a man who is stereotyped."

Women:

"I couldn't live without them."

The world:

"I am just as much anti-nuclear as anybody. Things have changed, you know. They might still be the same, they might just look different."

Change for the better:

"In the States they have. In a lot of different parts of the States, they have, sure."

Changed for the better?

"For the better? In the United States? See, I can only speak for things in the United States. Well, it's like we've been talking, it's true there's a lot of oppression in the United States. but it's also true there's more freedom there."

How much of the music comes from the subconscious and how much are you a medium for God?

"I don't know. It gets less and less that's pulled up from my subconscious. I used to pull a lot of it up. I pull some of it up once in a while now, but not too often."

Medium for God?

"I feel that way about most of the stuff I do. I may not know at the time that that's what happening, or that might be the process, but when I see it later it seems to me that that's the way it happens."

Surprised his influence wasn't stronger in '60s as the ministerial poet?

"Yeah, but see, poetry, it takes a long time to get your thing together. Everybody expects (pause)... **there's this commercialism of stuff where if you're a good looking kid or got a good voice they expect you to be able to do it all. You may be good looking and you may have a great voice, but if you've never had experience to go with it, you're just gonna be disposed of.**

"There are quite a few people that did that (follow his lead)**. I think it does a lot whether. you know it or not, because a lot of stuff that is really good, nobody is really turned up to, you know. Most of the things you're exposed to you just hear on the radio or television and it's like if it's not on the radio or on the television it's not happening, and that's not true at all. There's a lot of stuff happening, but it's not Just happening on that level."**

Music affecting society and politics.

"No, I don't think so. I think they (music) **can get into people's subconscious minds, maybe in a roundabout way, and they make people feel better. They feel that maybe sometimes what they are thinking or feeling they can hear it articulated in a song and they may think, yeah, I'm not so crazy to feel that way."**

If the credit for recent work lies with God, where does the credit for year early work lie?

"It's all for God, you know."

On patriotism and the scoundrel reference in "Sweetheart Like You" and is Patriot a scoundrel?

"Groups of people who use America for a stepping stone for a more powerful position In the rest of the world. I mean, face it, there are people who are trying to gain control of the entire world now, not just in America, but everywhere. There would seem like in future there's gonna be some man that wants to be powerful enough to rule the world, and why not?"

The press — could he have made it without them?

"No. I could not have made it without their help. The press wasn't that powerful when I got started. I only got turned off the press in the mid-60s when record companies would send me over to do an interview with someone and you'd be honest with that person and he'd ask you questions and you answer them in an honest way and then you'd see the article would come out and, not dishonest, but he'd take quotations and turn things around and make you seem like a different kind of person by using everything that you gave him. So you felt like you'd been suckered into something.

"Someone else has an idea about doing something to you and you were innocent and didn't know about it, so, after that I started to get turned off by the manner of the people who were coming to interview you for a magazine.

"When I was talking about the press I wasn't talking about war reporters or people covering fires or investigating murders. I never meant that side of the press, just the side that was pertaining to the entertainment section."

Career:

"What career? I've never had a career. I am somebody that doesn't work for a living."

What does Bob Dylan think of Bob Dylan?

"Bob Dylan doesn't ever think about Bob Dylan."

Whey does he continue? Does he enjoy it?

"Well, this is about all I can really do. I don't really remember doing anything else."

But, you don't have to?

"I don't have to? ... I don't know."

21 February 1986
EON-FM Radio Interview, Melbourne, Australia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1055-1056.

This interview by an (as yet) unknown individual (XX) was recorded at the poolside of the Rockmans' Regency Hotel in Melbourne during Bob's 1986 tour. It took place either on the 20th or 21st of February 1986 and was broadcast on EON – FM Radio on the 21st.

BD: Okay, this is Bob Dylan... they're gonna play a record of mine next and your listening to EON.

DJ: You've done 30 albums or 30-some albums by now and that's a lot of material... a lot of songs. How do you go about actually selecting songs you're going to do in a performance of 3 hours or 2½ hours or whatever?

BD: Well, I usually... I usually try to put in songs which are different in their own context, either structurally or melodically or uh lyrically, that uh, don't... so it's not all the same type of material, I try to fill in a larger picture. I don't know what the total effect of it is. Umm... How do I go about selecting the material? Well, there's material that I WANT to play, there's material that I feel I HAVE to play, and, uh, I try to get the material that I feel I have to play into the frame of mind where I want to play the material that I have to play. The rest of it is just stuff I want to play.

XX: Who do you figure... is there somebody that you're aware of in the world that may be a logical successor to the contribution that you've made to music and thought over the years?

BD: Well, strangely enough you know I've thought about that. People ask you at the time when you think you're gonna quit, when you've had enough, you know, when you're gonna get out, and uh, we were just talking this morning, I was telling somebody that your health will knock you out, first of all. If you're physically not able to do it, that's it, it's over you know. You can't just be some... like an ageing, uh, rock and roll performer, or sort of like... an ageing baseball player, actually, you know. I mean, you get your high points and that's it. Well, if you're physically together you can stay together. I'm also not an oldies type performer, oldies circuit thing. So that's one of the reasons you'd probably drop out and then another reason would be if you saw somebody coming along who you could help, and... Pete Townsend was talking about that one time, but, umm... and he got some criticism for saying it. But I understood exactly what he was talking about and it was, like, time to hand, uh, you know, the torch or something to somebody else. Well, you know, like it doesn't happen that way in rock and roll, you don't just hand it to somebody. The idea is right, but...

XX: Somebody comes and takes it?

BD: Yeah.

XX: You've been through the 50's, the 60's, the 70's, the 80's and we're heading into the year 2000. What do you feel generally about the next 20 years in the world?

BD: Well, I don't know, I've stopped counting, you know, I stopped counting. The 50's were rough. Everybody romanticises the 50's but that was a very rough time. Uh it's not as, it was not as spectacular... The only thing I remember that kept everybody going that I know in the 50's was maybe a few films that Marlon Brando made, or James Dean or... and the rockabilly music, you know, and rhythm and blues and that was it. But that music, you had to really... that's like... it called out to you, and very few people were onto it. And it was like a... almost like a life-raft thrown to people who were different back then. I don't know, there are people, the same type of people today, I don't know

what's calling to them, what life-raft they have, because everything is kinda closing in... It's all like, this town here, this looks like the same as San Antonio, Texas, you know? It wasn't so in the 50's, or the 60's. Umm, everything, you know it's the same food, it's the same clothes, it's the same look, it's the same cars, it's the same materials, it's, you know, the same language, just about. Uh, that of course is on this side of the world. In the other parts of the world, it's, you know they have a real... Umm.. There's two sides to the world, there's the good side and the bad side, you know, and it's relatively civilised, I play in relatively civilised places, but I have been in places that are not civilised.

22 February 1986
Maurice Parker interview, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Source: *Circulating tape*

BD: I don't write songs if they're not easy to write. If it's hard for me to write something I usually drop it. I don't usually struggle with it. I have done that, but I don't usually like the results.

[clip from *Like a Rolling Stone* is shown. Probably from one of the Melbourne shows]

BD: You can tell during a show they respond to certain things that you think are... when you think you're doing something, you know. And when the crowd responds to that, you know, it gives you more confidence.
MP: Do you need to worry about confidence?
BD: No, not on the stage (laughs)**.**
MP: What about before you go on stage?
BD: Well, yeah, in that area. You know, there is in the life of mine.
MP: Such as?
BD: Oh, like in a room full of crowded people, you know, a party of something. I usually don't like to mingle with too many people.
MP: Why is that?
BD: I don't know...
MP: Obviously, when you walk into a room...
BD: Like everybody either purposely avoids you or purposely confronts you. So sometimes it can be uncomfortable.
MP: How do you sort of react to that confrontation then?
BD: Usually I try to leave.
MP: Quickly?
BD: As quick as I can. Usually through the back door or some place.
MP: Where do you feel most comfortable then?
BD: Just about anywhere really. I'm not really discomfortable anywhere.
MP: Being on the stage is the place where it really all happens for you?
BD: Yeah. I have a better understanding of who I am up there.

[*Like a Rolling Stone* clip again]

BD: I wouldn't describe myself as confident or unconfident. I'm just... (laughs)... **how'd I describe myself? I can't describe myself in one or two words considering the fact that I have written over 300 or 400 songs that do describe me.**
I have a lot of other people speak for me. If you wanna find out what I'm like you usually have to ask other people. Usually you can find out better from someone who don't know me.
MP: What can you tell me?
BD: I can't tell you more that you can tell me about yourself, you know. I think it's wrong for a person to talk about themselves.
MP: Why is that?
BD: While a person's life speaks for itself. If you've done good things people will spread the news and if you've done bad things people will spread the news, too.
MP: So how then would you like to be remembered?
BD: Oh, as someone who tried to love somebody.
MP: So...

BD: Have you ever heard that expression before?
MP: I've heard that, yeah, yeah. What's love to you then?
BD: Love to me is a active thing. Love to me is an action type thing. It's not a word it's not a passive thing. If you love somebody you prove it.

[Clip of *Emotionally Yours* is played]

MP: What about romance?
BD: Romance is kind of in the fantasy area. It's sort of... It's got a dead end.
MP: Do you like humor?
BD: Humor? Of course I do. I love humor. I love to laugh. It's one of my favorite things.
MP: There goes your answer! People read articles about you, etc. and they say you're solemn and quiet, this sort of thing…
BD: Once in a while.
MP: What makes you laugh then.
BD: Well, something funny.
MP: Ha, ha. You got me there!

10 March 1986
MTV Interview, Backstage, Budokan Hall, Tokyo

Source: *Circulated raw tape*

This is a transcription of a 6+ -minute tape which seems to be a fraction of the whole interview. To the best of my knowledge there's nothing more in general circulation. There are two reporters asking questions – male (MR) and female (FR).

BD: The people my age I know are mostly musicians anyway. I really don't know people whose so called "age group" can be defined by an age group. The only people my age that I do consistently know are only other musicians. Outside of that, I don't know anybody at my own age at any type of social level, so unless of course they're a writer or a musician or an artist and at this area of life age isn't really important. You know, you just go out and play and see who comes. If younger people are coming, well, they seem… They see something new that they've not seen in their own younger group. They same way that I would go see older people when I was starting out playing when I was 18, 19, 20, 21. I mean I knew who the people were that I played with and people who were around doing the same things that I was. But if I wanted to see somebody play and learn about something, I would always go find much older type of person like Muddy Waters or Sleepy John Estes or somebody, you know, John Lee Hooker, something that I… Bill Monroe, you know, somebody like that. I never thought I'd be one of those people that younger people would ever come and see. I know it's all about younger people now, so…

MR: In some way you should be rediscovered by the young people. How do you feel about that?

BD: I don't know. I've always been doing what I've been doing, so I just don't have any idea… and no feeling or whatsoever… Rediscovered or discovered I mean, you know… it doesn't mean anything.

MR: A lot of artists did have a career, you know, anywhere approachable in length and depth to yours who had come to the stage maybe earlier than you, want to drop the past behind and leave the old songs and you continue to play yours…

BD: Mm-hmm, well, I continue to play them, because they actually hold up. They actually hold up in a lot of funny ways. They just do. They hold up. The words ring true. There are some songs that I can't play that I just don't feel like wanna play during a certain period, but the real old songs, they seem to really hold up, you know. There are certain ones, certain periods that I couldn't make hold up, I could stand them up in a certain way… That takes a lot of concentration and effort and anyway I'm not sure if they're that important anyway, because some of people come to see you for ah hour, hour and a half, two hours, what ever it is. I mean, they come to see you, and you could be doing anything upon that stage, you know, you can talk or fry an egg up there, hammer a nail into a piece of wood… they come to see you do something. And if you do nothing, that's alright, too, because at least they came and they saw you. It's not really about what you're doing or trying to impress anybody… Me, I just do what it is that I've always done, I was always in it, all the way to the end when I started. I means I had no other place to go and I had nothing to do. Except make music and write lyrics to that stuff. I was always in it for keeps when I was a little boy. I knew I was gonna be doing this rest of my life… as long as I was gonna be alive. So to point that anybody'd be disappointed in this or that on me, I mean, it's ridiculous. I don't pay much attention to that, because I'll be doing this for as long as I'm around, you know. And all the people I admired, they've all done it all the way to the end, too. It's all I do and I just keep doing that thing.

MR: Can you give us an example of some songs of yours that you think are no longer relevant?

BD: I don't say they're no longer relevant. It's that there are certain… maybe something… probably I'd do ANY song that I'd ever written, but to put them in a show is a different thing, because it takes time, and there's not a lotta time when you play for a few hours. First, I don't think I need to perform it or play for an hour… we play like a two-hour show, but the more records you put out, the more songs you write, the more you feel compelled that you have to put it in your program and another ones you have to drop out. Well, in the old days a show you didn't play for any longer than an hour and that was it. 14, 15 songs. 20 minutes – most of packet shows, most of those people played 20 minutes. And it some kind of way get out to where we perform… the more songs you write the more you do, the more you just have to stick to do onstage, so you have to drop things along the way, 'cause you can't do them all. I mean if I was going out there to do thirty-albums worth of stuff, you know, I'd be I'd be up there for days. There'd be no point to that.

FR: Your 'Biograph' actually sold better than any other five-record set ever released in the United States. How do you feel about it?

BD: I am surprised by that, actually. I really don't know, you know. I really don't know, I haven't really thought about it. It's great that it is… Selling records, but it's nothing that you can plan for. Those kind of things just happen, so… I don't know.

31 March 1986
Acceptance speech for the ASCAP Award, Chasen's Restaurant, Los Angeles, California

Source: *Belfast Telegraph*, p.6, Tuesday, April 1, 1986 reproduced in *Rolling Telegraph Supplement* #2, p.15
Circulating raw footage

Belfast Telegraph, Tuesday, April 1, 1986
Stars come out to honour Bob Dylan

THE music and movie establishment has paid tribute to Bob Dylan, honouring the poet-songwriter for a quarter century of achievement as an outspoken trendsetter in American popular music.

Songwriter Hal David, president of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, presented the group's second Founder's Award to Dylan at a party last night at Chasen's Restaurant that attracted a crowd including Elizabeth Taylor, Whoopi Goldberg, Neil Young and Burt Bacharach.

"I'd like to feel like I'm accepting this award for a lot of people who started out in rock n' roll and folk music, and never claimed to be as good as Johnny Mercer or Hal David or Jerome Kern or any of those people," Dylan said.

Pioneer

"We just used that medium to write what we were feeling, you know. And I feel like I'm accepting this for a lot of other people who are in the same category I'm in."

David referred to Dylan as a "pioneer, innovator, trendsetter and poet of his generation," saying ASCAP officials decided to give him the award — first given two years ago to Stevie Wonder — because of their esteem for the man "whose legendary contributions have been a sustaining influence on the music of an entire generation."

He also said the board "thought it was time we let him know how much we care for him and what he stands for." Dylan appreciated the thought, David added, describing the legendary but reclusive singer as "tickled pink to be here... and to have so many friends here."

Dylan apparently shared those sentiments, ending his comments by reciting lyrics from a song that Elvis Presley quoted in accepting another award — **"Without a song, the day would never end. Without a song, the road would never bend. When things go wrong, a man ain't got a song, without a friend."**

Speaking later to reporters, Dylan said he thought it **"ironic that I'm honoured for anything."** He also said of his work, **"I guess it's been inspiring. I know it's been inspiring to me to write it."**

Asked if he thought modern music was as significant as the songs of the '60s, he replied: **"Not really. But I think it's going to change. People are going to get sick of it."**

Dylan, dressed in black leather pants and a white scoop-necked T-shirt, spent most of the night sitting next to Taylor, talking with party guests.

Admired

The actress told reporters she admired Dylan most as a lyricist.

"He's a great poet and a marvellous musician," she said. "I love to read his lyrics. They're wonderful poetry."

Several other musicians also shared their thoughts about Dylan — whose songs include such classics as "*Blowing in the Wind,*" "*It Ain't Me, Babe,*" "*The Times They Are A-Changing*" and "*Like A Rolling Stone*."

Leonard Cohen, another singer-songwriter who emerged in the 1960s, called him "one of the greatest hearts that has spoken of the heart in a long, long time."

"Bob Dylan is a figure that arises every three or four hundred years," he added. "He represents and embodies all the finest aspirations of the human heart. He is unparalleled in the world of music and will remain a torch for all singers and all hearts for many generations to come."

Actual transcription follows:

HD: Good evening, I'm Hal David, and on behalf of Board of Directors of ASCAP without who we wouldn't be here today, I'm calling one of the great voices of the American music, Bob Dylan! (round of applause) And if there's any question about the esteem all of us hold for Mr Dylan, just have a look at this crowd, that says a great deal. He's been called a pioneer, an innovator, a trendsetter, and a poet of his generation. All those phrases fit. Beginning in the early 60's, Bob Dylan made everyone sit up and take notice. Writing songs that make up a part of our national heritage. He is the singer/songwriter personified. And for over 25 years, he has written and sung the songs he has created. The times they kept a-changin', but Dylan always stayed true to himself. Someone once called him a lone figure with a guitar and a point of view. And the remarkable thing is that the guitar and the point of view are still here 25 years later. Not only in his own music, but in the music of many of other contemporary artists, notably Bruce Springsteen. The far-reaching impact of Bob Dylan songs like *Blowin' in the Wind*, *It Ain't Me, Babe*, *Like a Rolling Stone*, *Mr Tambourine Man* and many others has made Dylan one of the most influential forces in pop music. And so, Bob, in recognition of all your accomplishments, I'd like to present you with a very special award on behalf of the ASCAP Board of Directors, all the ASCAP members, and if I may, would you come up here, I'll read it to you and I'll give it to you. (round of applause) This says, "*The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers presents the ASCAP Founders' Award to Bob Dylan whose legendary contributions to music have been a sustaining influence on the music of the entire generation, and whose accomplishments reflect the goal set forth by ASCAP Founding Fathers. March 31, 1986.*" Bob…

BD: All right… Okay…

Q: Bob, I wonder if at this point you find it ironic that you're getting this award from the Hollywood establishment after all those years of writing your songs — I'm from New York — … what are your feeling about that?

BD: Well, I'd like to feel like I'm accepting this award for a lot of people who started out in rock n' roll and folk music, and never claimed to be as good as Johnny Mercer or Hal David or Jerome Kern or any of those people, but we just used that medium to write what we were feeling, you know. And I feel like I'm accepting this for a lot of other people who are in the same category I'm in. I hope they all get awards.

HD: We'd like to thank everybody for coming and now, have a terrific time.

BD: I'd like to quote like Elvis Presley did when he accepted some award. When he accepted it he said, "Without a song, the day would never end. Without a song, the road would never bend. When things go wrong, a man ain't got a friend, without a song."

Q: You were writing in the 1960's. Do you think the music of the '80's is as important as the music of the 1960's?

BD: Nah, not really. But I think it's going to change.

BD: This man here is a great songwriter. He should be honored, too.

Q: Why did you say it is going to change?

BD: Ah, people are going to get sick of it.
Q: What's your reaction to this (function?)
BD: Oh, it's beautiful. I'm just happy to be here.
Q: Bob, what about the future, where are you gonna go from here?
BD: I'm going home.

31 March 1986
Dick Shoemaker interview, Chasen's Restaurant, Los Angeles

Source: *Circulating tape*

DS = Dick Shoemaker
NY = Neil Young

DS: Bob Dylan was honored by ASCAP, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. Afterwards the elusive entertainer talked exclusively to *Entertainment Tonight* about returning to the spotlight.

BD: Well, I'm back in and I'm outside and I'm all over the place. I love to be just all over the place.

DS: What about being a role model for so many of the people who are doing music today?

BD: No, no, no. Not a role model.

DS: What are you?

BD: I'm just me.

DS: What can we look for in the future in terms of Bob Dylan.

BD: I'm letting Neil answer that.

NY: Just more of the same, man. More of the same, you know.

DS: Why is it, do you feel, that your music down to the earth has meant so much to so many people?

BD: Well, I guess it's been inspiring. I know it's been inspiring to me to write it. Outside of that, I wouldn't know.

DS: What do you think that there is about your music that seems to make sense to people. I mean, why has it captured so many people?

BD: I don't know, I really just don't. I'm still trying to make sense of it to me, you know?

DS: Did you think back in the 60's that you would be here today enjoying the adoration of the people who believe in music and getting this material reward as well?

BD: I never thought about it.

DS: Never thought about it?

BD: M-hm. (shaking his head)**. I didn't know I was gonna be here twenty years ago.**

DS: Why?

BD: Well, you know, nobody ever knows. You live only one day at a time.

April 1986
Charles Kaiser interview for Boston Review

Source: *The Rolling Telegraph Supplement* #2, p. 22

The *Boston Review* of April 1986 includes several quotations from an interview with Charles Kaiser in an article called *Encountering Dylan*:

About *The Times They Are A-Changin'*:

"I wanted to write a big song in a simple way."

About TV:

"TV is so super powerful. It forms people's opinions. When I was growing up, and even in the sixties, that never was the case. You had to go out and experience things to form opinions. Now you don't have to move. You get knowledge brought in to you, you know, without the experience of it. So I think there's something really dangerous in that."

About God:

"People talk about Sylvester Stallone , you know , and they talk about Pacino and they talk about last year's flood, and they talk about '*Miami Vice*' and they talk about the new Dustin Hoffman movie – and all that is exciting for people. But God doesn't interest people for some reason."

About his second marriage:

When I asked him if he had been married again after his brutal divorce from his first wife, Sarah (sic), he said **"Yes, in a manner of speaking."**

A few minutes later he reconsidered and made that **"Yes, as a matter of fact."** Asked if he was still married to the woman who became his second wife in "about 80", he said, **"I'm not sure"**

7 April 1986
MTV interview re: *Band of the Hand (It's Hell Time Man)* video

Source: *circulating tape*

Dylan:
(Strange?) boys who kinda grow up in a kinda harsh way and kinda make their way through that learning how to deal with certain elements in society they know that usually in the passive would take an advantage of them, and they have to overcome that and go from bad to good.

10 April 1986
Press Conference, Westwood One Radio Offices, Los Angeles, Ca

Source: *Circulating tape*

Q: We'd like to ask Bob first of all, this tour came together because of a purpose and a reason, so as the man behind it all you asked Tom Petty to back you up onstage. Why did you guys put this together?

BD: What did we what?

Q: Why did you guys put this together? Why did you decide to put this collaboration together?

BD: We just felt like it.

Q: Oh, it's a good answer, but it's probably a journey of two of the best known names in rock n' roll and a chance to bring the public… a change to see these two groups together. Why did you, of all the groups out there, decide upon Tom Petty as your group to back you up?

BD: Well, you know, it just sort of happened by itself, really.

Q: But you guys had done a lot of talking beforehand, playing in some studios and such, and the chemistry was right…

BD: Well, you know, you're always looking for people to play with.

Q: Tom, I saw you in Japan when I was there. Are you gonna be different from the Japanese and the New Zealand and Australian shows?

TP: Well, they were different every night, they could be different… Basically, the same kind of thing, probably… same kind of format. It'll be a little different day to day.

Q: Bob, what's the most important song you ever wrote?

BD: Yeah. Probably 'Song to Woody.' Song called 'Song to Woody,' 'cause it was my first song.

Q: Bob, what was your reaction when you met with Woody Guthrie as he was dying in a hospital? What were your emotions?

BD: Oh, I felt sick.

Q: With regards to the line-up of the songs that you chose for this tour, what were some thoughts behind it? In other words, is there some of Tom's stuff and some of your stuff, I mean, how did you put that together?

TP: We just, well, pretty much played what sounded good, you know, most of the time. There is a little of everything, and there is a lot of other people's songs, too.

Q: Bob, it's been five years apparently since you've been on tour in the United States. Are you anxious to get that tour started in summer?

BD: Yeah, I have.

Q: How much?

BD: That much.

Q: You are ready to go on road again in the United States this summer…

BD: Yeah. I'm excited about it.

Q: What was that actually drew you to… together?

TP: Money. (laughter) No, we just… enjoy the music.

Q: Stadium/Arena tour is (inaudible). What's making this one different for you?

TP: (to Dylan) Is he talking to you?

BD: (to Petty) **I don't know.**

Q: Some of (inaudible) the 'Biograph' album being emotionless trip or a slaughterhouse, something that you felt detached from. What's making this tour different for you?

BD: I said all that?

Q: You did on the 'Biograph' album…

BD: Really? Oh, this one, this is bound to be better.

Q: Why?
BD: Just is.
Q: Tom, do you think that your music and Bob's music can work together?
TP: I don't know, I haven't even thought about it that deeply, it's just… you know… works. It is rock n' roll music. Is it… figuring out how the two things work together – I don't know. Some sounds good, or it don't.
Q: Are you writing songs together?
BD: Yeah.
TP: Mm-hmm.
Q: Is any of them gonna be on the tour?
BD: Could be.
Q: Bob?
BD: Yeah.
Q: What was your reaction to Richard Manuel's suicide?
BD: It depressed me.
Q: Bob, are you Jewish again on this tour?
BD: Oh, I'm Jewish only when I have to be.
Q: When so you have to be?
BD: Every so often, you know.
Q: Are you a Christian on this tour?
BD: Part of the time, yeah.
Q: Do you think you will find any difference in the audience in the United States that changed in the last five years or so…
BD: I don't think so. No, I don't think the audiences have changed at all. Not since I've been playing.
Q: Forty-five years?
BD: Really?
Q: Bob, you said at your last press conference that people would be starting to feel sick of the current music…
BD: I said that?
Q: Yes, you said, "People are going to get sick of today's music." Is it an attempt at maybe changing music on your part?
BD: Nah, what I think I said that the people are going to change it, not the musicians. People just are gonna want to get that simple music again. They're gonna demand that musicians play it.
Q: Are you gonna bring up the new stuff along with the old songs?
BD: Oh yeah, that's all the kind of stuff mine is. I can't play complicated stuff anyway.
Q: Bob and Tom both, how did the audiences differ from where have you been to where you are going; where you just finished playing to where you'll be playing this summer in the United States? Did the audiences differ at all?
TP: Not basically. I think they are basically the same. There's not a lot of difference even in a place like Japan. No, I don't think there's a great deal difference.
Q: On some of your tours you come up with some original arrangements to some of your songs. Have you and Tom done so for this tour…
BD: Yeah. Most of it sounds like it used to sound, you know.
Q: Are you still working on your autobiography?
BD: No, I gave that up.
Q: Do you think you are ever going to resume it?
BD: I don't know.
Q: Do you think that your life would be an interesting story to read?
BD: Not really.
Q: What are your associations with the Band of the Hand (inaudible)?
BD: Well, I don't know, I can't remember.

Q: How many tunes did you contribute to the soundtrack?

BD: Can't even say, I don't know. One probably.

TP: One.

Q: Bob, why did you (inaudible)?

BD: Oh, I don't know, it was just too… You know, I don't really like to think about it by myself.

Q: Stevie Nicks joined you on a couple of dates in Australia. Will we have any surprise guests on your American tour?

BD: Joan Baez might come… show up somewhere.

21 May 1986
Bob Fass Interview/Phone-In, New York City, New York

Source: *Hungry As a Raccoon* by John B. Way, pp. 91-114.
The Fiddler Now Upspoke, pp. 917-930.

This interview / phone-in session has been transcribed from the circulating tape and then compared with the transcript by John Way in his excellent book *Hungry As A Raccoon*, with differences in opinion being resolved by a third party. As background, I've taken the liberty of using the introduction in John Way's book – I could not do better, so why try.

Twenty years after Dylan's appearance on Radio Unnameable WBAI-FM decided, probably largely at Bob Fass's (BF) suggestion, to honor his 45th birthday in quite spectacular fashion with what amounted to a forty-five hour Special. (One hour for every year of course, and the records played throughout included all of Dylan's 45's). This was broadcast over a three-day period, May 22-24.

Dylan had agreed to take part in a telephone interview/phone-in during the first day's broadcast; only as he was in California this time there were already potential difficulties in communication. His contact with Bob Fass since 1966 would have been minimal at best, and with his status having grown to legendary proportions in the meantime, perhaps it's not surprising to find Fass so deferential – not to say fawning – compared with his 1966 attitude. The listeners were able to make a direct comparison too, since the 1966 phone-in was broadcast again courtesy of a tape provided by Mitch Blank: Bob Fass didn't have a copy himself.

This time Fass didn't run the show on his own but with Robert Knight (RK) who is efficient, if not inspired or inspiring. There is additional input from time to time from Steve Ben Israel (SB) (who knew Dylan during the early '60s), most of whose comments had been edited out when the interview/phone-in was broadcast again a couple of days later (some more of the broadcast was also edited out, principally the repetition where Bob was unable to hear the caller's questions – JAB).

Dylan is friendly enough throughout the ordeal, and generally accommodating, if not too forthcoming, but like he says: **"I can't remember what I was doin' lately. I've been locked up in the studio for, uh, what seems a long time"**. In fact he had been working on putting an album together for about four weeks and Mikal Gilmore, who interviewed him for *Rolling Stone* during this period, reported: "His weary air reminds me of something he'd said earlier: **"Man, sometimes it seems I've spent half my life in a recording studio – it's like living in a coal mine"...**" there's also a note of tension about the evening. The pressure of completing the album has reportedly been wearing on Dylan, and his mood is said to have been rather dour and unpredictable these last several days... Dylan tries to warm up to the task of the evening's interview. But... he seems somewhat distracted, almost edgy, and many questions don't seem to engender much response. Add to that the problems of active communication over a transcontinental phone-line, and I suppose that the listeners and callers were lucky to get what they did.

Since 1986 there have been further Dylan Specials on WBAI, but with no further direct input from the man himself.

— John B. Way

RK: This is WBAI in New York. I'm Robert Knight – that's Bob Fass...
BF: Hi.
RK: And that's Bob Dylan. Good morning, Bob.
BD: Hi.
BF: Hi Bob! How are you?
BD: I'm OK.
BF: Been quite a while since I talked to you, or you to the world over WBAI...
BD: Yeah.
BF: What's that?
BD: I said yeah, it has been quite a while, right.
BF: So far. But at the moment it's right now.
BD: Mm.
BF: Have you any messages for the...?
BD: Nothing. Now, what you doing?
BF: Well, Bob. It's your birthday in a couple of days – it probably slipped your mind.
BD: ...my birthday back, I forgot to tell you.
BF: What's that?
BD: I pushed my birthday back this year.
BF: Oh, you did?
BD: Yeah.
BF: Did you go to court and have it legally changed?
BD: Oh no. I just did it.
BF: You went to an astrologer?
BD: No, I just... you know?
RK: Is that Dylan-saving time?
BF: Is that a way to save time?
BD: Sure is, yeah.
BF: Uh-huh. I think that will catch on. When did you push it back to?
BD: I pushed it back just a few weeks.
BF: Uh huh. When will it be now?
BD: I don't know. I'd like it to be in New York, you know. I think I'll push it back, actually, until I get there.
BF: Well, today is the third day of the rest of your life, you know?
BD: (laughs)**.**
SB: Hi Bob! This is Steve Ben Israel, man. How are you doing? Love you, man.
BD: OK.
BF: Yeah, I...
RK: Basically, what we're doing here in New York is thanking you for having this next birthday, whenever it may be.
BF: And for all the others, and for the very first one, uh, we're all very grateful. I was just talking about how I had been led to you, at the very first, looking for other people. First time I went to hear you I heard Lightin' Hopkins, or at least that's who I thought I would remember from that moment, but, uh, uh, I... yeah, I guess it might just as well have been John Lee Hooker. And there you were, playing with him. And, uh, I thought... I sort of thought what you did was, uh, wonderful, but not humble enough. That's who I was, then.
BD: Yeah.
BF: I, I... second time I heard you I thought "God, this guy has a lotta talent. Now why is he doing things this way instead of that way?" Cause that's where I was at at the time. And all through my life, without ever having talked to you about it, I've heard you singing the story of my life. And you weren't even there! And I talked to other people and, uh, you've

been telling them the news about their lives all these years too. And we just wanna say thank you for it, Bob. Thank you Bobby.

BD: I appreciate that.

BF: Well, we appreciate you, man.

BD: I hope somebody'll sing about my life.

BF: (laughs) Well... people don't sing about your life, you know? People don't tell stories on you. You wanna tell a few on yourself?

BD: Ha, no. Stories – I don't have many.

BF: You have millions of stories, it seems.

RK: Do you ever find it inhibiting in the...?

BD: No. Who's this, still Bob?

RK: This is Robert Knight.

BD: Oh, OK.

RK: And I was wondering if, uh, if you ever find it limiting to know that what you do means so much to so many?

BD: What?

BF: How does it feel to sing, uh, the same song – *Blowin' In The Wind* – for thirty years?

BD: Oh. It still feels, uh, the same, you know? Still feels like it was just written yesterday.

BF: It sounds like you... you still... mean it. Really mean it. And, uh, uh, one time... you told me you didn't think people would get it, about one particular song, and I really think people are getting it. Maybe a little too late.

BD: Well...

BF: But, uh, uh...

BD: Well, you know – it's nice to be appreciated, though, on any level, at any time.

BF: Well, we don't mean to embarrass you, Bobby. We just wanna say thank you. And ask you maybe to tell us a few details about, uh... you're goin' around the world: you gonna make any unusual stops on your world tour?

BD: Unusual?

BF: Yeah – I mean, you're not gonna visit the Middle East?

BD: Oh, you know. They're all unusual!

BF: (laughs).

SB: Are you gonna come down... hang down MacDougal Street on this next tour – in this next New York – gig, Bob?

BD: (laughs)**.**

SB: This is Steve, man.

BD: Yeah!

SB: Come down the Café Borgia for an espresso, huh?

BD: All right.

SB: OK, we'll see you there.

BD: OK. Who's this, now?

SB: Steve Ben Israel, man.

BD: Yeah... Well, what more can I say?

RK: Have you been listening to anything interesting, musically, lately?

BD: Well, let me see. Uh... ohh... can't remember.

BF: Have you heard Falco?

BD: Falco?

BF: Yeah.

BD: What's that?

BF: Well, he's got the number one song, and he's got one of your songs on his album: he's German.

BD: Who does?... Oh... Which one?

BF: *Baby Blue*.

BD: Oh, all right. Mm. I re... I remember that. I still do that once in a while.

BF: (laughs) We'd love to hear you doing it soon. That birthday that you're pushing back – h, have you picked a date yet?

BD: No, not really. I'm gonna push it back some time in, uh, June.

BF: June?

BD: Yeah!

BF: All right.

SB: June 17th.

BF: OK... why June 17th?

SB: That's the extra, uh, concert that's been added to Madison Square Garden, because the first two have been sold out, so they've added one on June 17th.

BD: Madison Square Gardens?

SB: Yeah. They've added a concert on June 17th, 'cause the first two were sold out.

BD: Hmm!

SB: So try June 17th – sounds like a good night for a birthday.

BD: Yeah.

RK: Anything interesting in the music you've been doing lately?

BD: Well. I'm just making another record, you know.

BF: Uh huh. Have you been, uh, writing alone or with other people this time?

BD: Let's see. It's about, uh... yeah, I did a song with Sam Shepard. You know Sam?

BF: Yeah. I remem...

BD: We wrote a song a while back. I think it's comin' out now. And, uh,... I don't know... Yeah, there are all different people comin' in and out, you know.

BF: Oh, Sam Shepard was in Renaldo and Clara. You discovered him as an actor.

BD: Is that right? (laughing)

BF: Yeah, well, I... I don't know, maybe not, but that could, uh... I don't know if that even could be said but... I discovered him through you – is what I really mean.

BD: Yeah. He's good you know.

BF: Yeah. So are you, man, so are you. Uh, Sam Shepard... why don't you tell the story of what part he played in that?

BD: Who, Sam?

BF: Yeah.

BD: What did he play? I don't know, I can't remember. He played a cowboy, didn't he? He played a... cowboy involved in a three way conversation or something, didn't he?

BF: Mm. Well... what was that three way conversation like?

BD: I don't remember.

BF: Well, I do. I sat through *Renaldo and Clara* four times.

BD: Wasn't he sittin' on a couch, er, with a woman...?

BF: It's a seven and a half hour movie!

BD: It was what?

BF: A seven and a half hour movie when I saw it. Probably should have been fifteen.

BD: Yeah, it could have been fifteen. You know, in India they have those movies that are twenty two hours long, you know. I mean... I like 'em long myself.

BF: What' s the album called?

BD: I think it's called *Knocked Out Loaded.*

BF: Ha... yeah. Mm.

RK: Is that your favorite way of producing? I see there's a visual environment for some musical releases now.

BD: Yeah. You mean like videos?

RK: Yeah.

BD: Well, I don't know, though. I'm not really... not really thinkin' about any videos right now.

BF: Mm, well. I mean, when you, uh... when I hear you... your songs... I see a movie in my head, whether it's a video or not. And I mean, no video could measure up completely to

my own imagination, or certainly to yours. I wonder, if you worked on a video or a movie, what that would be like. *Renaldo and Clara* was really a gorgeous movie, and certainly the music which we've been playing from *Renaldo and Clara* was just gorgeous, gorgeous concert music, and private music.

BD: Well, thank you.

BF: Well... thank you, Bob, and happy birthday. I have a feeling that you're, you know, standing there kinda tugging at your collar, when your friends say 'surprise' and you walk in the door.

BD: Oh, no. As a matter of fact I don't even have a shirt on... you know?

RK: Bob, a lot of people have attributed inspirations to you, but I'd like to reverse that process and wonder if you, as a person being performed, have noted any particular changes or messages from the people and audiences that you see currently?

BD: Say that once more.

RK: When you perform, I wonder if you as a performer also receive messages from the audience, or feelings or attitudes.

BD: Oh, yeah. All the time. I think everybody feels... every performer feels...

RK: Ah. What's... well, what... what signals are you getting now? What's coming to you?

BD: Uhh... well, I don't know. You mean the last... last time out?

RK: Yeah.

BD: You know, it changes a bit from night to night. Certain people always you pick out, you know, or they pick you out or something.

BF: Mmmm. Do you get any feeling about the kinda people who go to hear music today? I see lots of young people at your concerts.

BD: Young, old, you know. Everybody goes to listen to music.

BF: Mm.

SB: The audience gets younger as you get older.

BF: You're a father. Uh...

BD: Some do, yeah.

BF: You must have some attitude about your children's music too...

BD: Uh... I don't know. Um... I don't know if I do or not. They listen to what they listen to you know, (pause)... **popping on the radio here and there's a big silence.**

BF: Well, we're waitin' on you Bob. We wanna know what you have to say, in somewhat... maybe you... you always said that your music speaks for you. Uh. But uh... there've been a couple of very pungent quotes that we've heard. People are always asking you about religion and people are always asking you about politics. But, uh... I remember that you used to say, you know, things that actually happen to you in your life that – I mean, I've carried stories around in my head for a long time that you told me, like... I don't know whether you either remember it yourself. I think maybe some of the things you told me in those days, you made up! But I remember a story you told once about working -guarding a pig at night as she was giving birth. You remember that story?

BD: A what?

BF: That's a story you told me, yeah.

BD: About a pig in the night?

BF: Yeah.

BD: What about it?

BF: Well, that you had to keep watching this sow to stop her from eating her children.

BD: What's that, now?

BF: Now, I've heard from other people who worked on farms that sometimes a pig gives birth and uh, eats...

BD: Oh yeah – lots of animals do that.

BF: Yeah.

BD: Yeah, yeah.

BF: And it was your job, you said, to watch this all night and to stop it.

BD: Yeah, that was a long time ago. I hadn't had any job that — for a while.
BF: Uh-huh. What you been doing lately?
BD: (laughs) **Making this...but I can't remember what I was doin' lately. I've been locked up in the studio for, uh, seems like a long time.**
BF: Well, uh, who is producing this latest album?
BD: Produces albums?
BF: Yeah. This next one.
BD: Oh, I don't know. Whoever wants to, I guess.
SB: Bob – is it true you're moving? (studio laughter) You can ask anyone you want!
BF: Well, how do they get in touch with you?
SB: Are you moving back to New York?
BF: A string of people would like to do that, I think.
BD: What people do that?
BF: I think there's probably a string of people all over the world who would like to produce your next album. A long line stretching blocks, you know, like...
BD: I don't know – I'm pretty hard to produce. I'm hard enough for me to produce, that's...
BF: (laughs) I think you lose – probably lose more songs than you record. I mean, probably you don't lose 'em so much any more but there are massive numbers of songs that are attributed to you and, uh, circulating recorded by you. Some of them I know you're really angry about and I've heard some of them and I think they're gorgeous. Just gorgeous. How do you feel about this avid thirst that people have to hear what you've got to say lately about practically anything?
BD: Well – I mean, you say it's true. I mean, I don't know it is.
BF: Well, uh you know, I hear from people who circulate your tapes. I hear people have circulated tapes through a kind of...
BD: A radio station in New York (clearly an aside to someone at Bob's end of the line), (to Bob Fass) **Yeah.**
BF: ...a kind of an underground network called *Wanted Man*. Have you ever heard about that?
BD: What?
BF: *Wanted Man*.
BD: Yeah!
BF: Have you ever heard about that?
BD: Oh, yeah! Is that... I don't think I ever recorded that, actually.
BF: (laughing) No – *Wanted Man* is a group of people who collect your, uh... your, uh... um, occult recordings.
BD: Oh, is that right?
BF: And they exchange them. They don't sell them.
BD: Mm-hm.
BF: And, uh, I don't know... I know you get pretty angry about some of that and, uh, I know maybe we shouldn't talk about what's been stolen from you, especially on your birthday, uh.
BD: No. Let's not talk about theft.
BF: Oh, OK, OK Is there anything that you would like to say...?
BD: Well, I would...
BF: I don't mean to impose on you, but...
BD: No, I'd just like to wish everybody Happy Birthday, you know.
BF: Oh, well, same to the rest of us and to you, and bless you, man.
BD: OK.
SB: Bob, this is Steve.
BD: OK Steve.
SB: Listen – uh, it's great you comin' out and playin' these last couple of years, and the last album we really love, and it's a beautiful affirmation...

BD: Oh, like that, man. Well, thank you... you know, well...
SB: And, uh, it's... like, a lotta artists around the world, you know, keeping up the continuum of, like, you know... hope and life and creativity and, uh, it's a great affirmation to us all, baby.
BD: Already comin' to New York.
SB: Yeah. Hey, it's great.
BD: ...seeing everybody I know. I have a lotta friends there, you know?
SB: Sure you do.
RK: When will you be here?
BD: Sometime this summer.
RK: We'll be here.
BD: Huh?...
RK: We'll be here.
BD: Well, you all come down and, uh... come on down, you know?
RK: Why did you decide to come on out right now and embark on a world tour? Any particular reason?
BD: Is this Steve?
RK: This is Robert.
BD: Oh, Robert. Well, Robert... you know, I never stop working. I've been working since, uh, '79... '78, '79, '81... I haven't stopped working, so now there's a lot of, you know... seems the last time we were in the East Coast and played, uh... See, I played Hartford and Meadowlands or somewhere, I don't know. But... you know, you can only play where people want you to play and, um, so like, I was only doing regional tours but I've never stopped working, you know. It just seems like now, uh, there's a... there's more of a demand for this show that we've... going out with now. Uh... so I don't know... nothing's changed around here. You all missed my gospel tours!
BF: Mm; no, we have... well, we have heard a lot about them.
BD: (laughs) **Yeah!**
BF: And, uh, we intend to be playing a lot of your gospel music.
BD: Yeah.
BF: We're... We have two, uh – two segments coming up. One is about your...
BD: You know a record you should play? There's a... there's a... I know the group used to be called The Alley Cats. Now they're called The Zarcons. I think they're pretty good.
BF: All right.
BD: You might have their record in your, uh...
BF: The Zarcons, huh?
BD: Yeah.
BF: OK. What are they like?
BD: Oh, they're young, you know? Punky rock n' roll kinda thing.
BF: You have any, uh, feeling about how music is gonna go next?
BD: Where music's going next?
BF: Yeah. I mean, a lot of what we say about music going is musicians leading the pack, and a lot of it's product. But what... what do you... I mean, how do you feel about where you're going to be listening next?
BD: What?
BF: Where are you gonna be listening next? What...
BD: Where am I gonna be listening next... I'll probably be going and listening and...
BF: To *Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers*.
BD: I don't know where I'm gonna be listening next. Tom Petty? Tom Petty's very good, you know. Do you play his records?
BF: Uh, yeah. We have been.
BD: Yeah, you should, 'cause...
BF: I've seen some of his videos, and they're wonderful.

BD: Oh, yeah? You can't tell much from video. I've seen... You really have to see somebody live to see what they're doing. You know that, right?

BF: Well, we've had opportunity to see you quite a bit more lately, at Farm Aid, and on, uh, the *Don't Play Sun City*.

BD: *Sun City*, yeah.

BF: What was that like?

BD: What, *Sun City*?

BF: Yeah.

BD: I don't know, I've never been there.

BF: Oh, I didn't expect that... I meant what was recording it like?

BD: What was, the recording of it?

BF: Yeah.

BD: I don't know. I mean, I just, uh, did my small part, you know... with Jackson Browne.

BF: Well, it sure looked good in the snatches that I've seen of it and, uh, uh, It was wonderful to see musicians a couple of times.

BD: New York now?

BF: What's that?

BD: What's happenin' in New York now? Is anything goin' on?

BF: Well, Space is the last frontier.

BD: Space?

BF: Yeah. Yeah, there's a whole new class of homeless people every fifteen minutes.

BD: Oh, wow.

SB: Manhattan gets sold every fifteen minutes.

BD: (mishearing) **It hasn't just sold everything?**

SB: Every fifteen minutes Manhattan gets sold, Bobby.

BD: (laughs)**.**

SB: Every fifteen minutes.

BD: Every fifteen minutes, wow. Where are they all comin' from?

SB: Just follow the bouncing coin.

BD: It's homeless?

RK: They're the ones that don't fit any more.

BD: Yeah, well, none of us fit any more, you know.

BF: Lotta homeless dictators end up here.

BD: Who ain't homeless?

BF: Well, uh, I mean... that's true, you know. We're all... *some of us are prisoners and some of us are guards*.

BD: ...over their heads, I know that's true.

BF: What's true?

BD: I know that's true, what you're saying. There's a lotta people on the streets that don't have a place to go when it's raining and cold.

RK: You see them in Southern California?

BD: Yeah. You see them everywhere, you know. Seems to be more of them these days.

SB: Yeah. Marty Sheen played that movie the other night about Mitch Schneider, the guy who takes care of people on the street in Washington, and that whole struggle.

BD: Oh yeah. I missed that. I heard about that.

SB: Yeah. It's quite spectacular.

BD: Mm.

RK: Some people are worrying about nuclear things.

BD: Yeah. Well, they always are doing that since they invented that. Nuclear – God. That never moves away, does it?

RK: 'Fraid not.

BF: Well, it seems to be receding, or at least people are becoming more and more aware of it. As you said once, *the answer is*...

RK: *Blowing in the wind*!
BF: Right. *Glowing in the wind*!
SB: Radiation? Oh, it's just like having an X-ray. All day.
BD: Yeah, right.
BF: Wash your vegetables and have your iodine tablets, Bob. Do you think you might like to talk to some people who are calling up on our telephone?
BD: Love that!
BF: What's that?
BD: I'd love that. Let me see if I have any more time...
BF: Have you got any more quarters to put in the phone? (A discussion can be heard at Bob's end of the phone). All right. If you'd like to talk to Bob Dylan, our telephone number is 279–3407. And we'll put you on your honor. WBAI is trying to raise a little money, and if you wanna talk to Bob Dylan on WBAI... After you talk to him, call up 279–3400 and pledge your support to WBAI.
RK: And you're on the air.
C1: Hello.
BF: Hi.
C1: Hello, is Bob there?
BD: Yeah.
C1: Bob, how you doin'?
BD: OK.
C1: OK, great. I'd like to wish you a very, very happy birthday.
BD: Oh, uh, thank you.
C1: You're quite welcome. I'd just like to say I grew up with your music. I've learned more from your music than I did in school.
BD: Well. Who is this?
C1: Uh, Walter from Dumont, New Jersey.
BD: Oh.
C1: A friend of a friend of yours.
BD: Oh, right.
C1: I'd just like to say I got tickets for you in New York. I'm looking forward to it.
BD: Oh, OK. We'll look forward to seeing you.
C1: Well, I'll be there for sure. No doubt.
BD: All right.
RK: OK, thanks, thanks for calling. You're on the air.
C2: Hello, Mr. Dylan.
BF: Hello?
BD: Yeah. I can't hear him.
BF: We'll repeat it. You say it and we'll repeat it.
C2: Oh, I'd just like to ask Mr. Dylan to talk about Woody Guthrie. I'm sixteen years old. I just finished reading *Bound For Glory*. I was wondering if he could, like, say what it was like to know Woody Guthrie.
RK: A sixteen year old boy who just read...
BF: *Bound For Glory*.
RK: Wants to know what it was like...
BF: To know Woody Guthrie.
BD: Well, you know, I never knew Woody Guthrie when he was travelin' around. You'd have to probably ask Jack Elliott about that. I knew Woody in his last days, you ; know. He was just sittin' mostly in a chair, bein' wheeled in and out. And, uh, his situation had, uh, pretty much deteriorated from, uh, from when he was out rambling around, you know. So... I mean, it was a thrill. I mean, I remember it was a... I felt like I'd got a... you know. I'd made a pilgrimage and a journey and I'd accomplished what I'd set out to do, but it really wasn't it... except just, you know, opening another door or

something. But I can still remember seeing Woody in the hospital and sometimes they'd be taking him out, and that's the Woody I remember. You know, he... what he looked like, you know. And he'd sing... he'd sing a song and we would play them for him. You know, it was so... it's been so long ago. I mean, it seems like the other day, but, uh... I don't really have any stories like you'd probably... the guys calling would like to hear. It's like... if he wanted to... Jack would be the guy to talk to, you know.

BF: Have you seen Jack lately?

BD: No, I haven't seen Jack in a while.

BF: We've been trying to get in touch with him, actually. He owes a lot of us money (laughs).

BD: Yeah.

BF: (Laughing) No, I...

RK: This is WBAI and you're on the air.

C3: Yeah. I'd like to say happy birthday to Bob, and it's good to hear him on BAI. Surprised me. Um, I'd like to ask him if he's looking forward to touring with the Grateful Dead. I know he's playing in, I guess, Minneapolis, Minnesota and Shott, near Buffalo and then RFK Stadium, I believe. I wonder if he's looking forward to it.

BD: I can't hear.

BF: He wants to know about your tour with the Dead and RFK Stadium.

BD: Uh, huh.

BF: He wants to know whether you're looking forward to it. We are.

BD: I don't know. I've never played that place before. I'm sure it'll be a good show. It's a stadium, uh, right? I don't know, you know.

C3: Hi. Has he ever played with Jerry Garcia before?

BF: Have you ever played with Jerry Garcia?

BD: Oh, yeah yeah. I've known Jerry for a long time. We go back a long way. Yeah, I've played with Jerry a lotta times.

C3: (laughs) It's great.

RK: Thank you for calling.

C3: Yep.

RK: This is WBAI. You're on the air with Bob Dylan.

C4: Hello.

BF: Hi.

C4: Hey. How you doin'?

BF: How are you?

C4: OK. Bob, can you hear me?

BD: Uh, yeah, barely.

C4: OK, good, great. Hey, I'm another admirer of yours, and, you know... and a songwriter to boot. And, um, I would like say happy birthday and **** and **** and keep it on. (**** = several words in Hebrew)

BD: Ha, ha. Great.

C4: And I'm listenin', man.

BD: All right.

C4: OK. My name is David Indian, and I love you. Happy birthday.

RK: Thank you.

BD: OK.

C4: Bye-bye.

RK: I happen to know that David Indian wrote a song about the nuclear home port in New York City, Bob, where they wanna put a nuclear surface action group, and some atomic missiles and such. And the politicians think it's a good idea but a lotta people think it's crazy. And David Indian wrote a song called Nuclear-Free Harbor.

BD: Mm. Yeah. Well, um, maybe I'll get to hear it.

RK: Yeah. Are there things you think important for people maybe to be thinking about in the world, in the context of also hearing music?

BD: Uh, well... yeah.
RK: Like what?
BD: Well, I mean, you know, like what kinda... What do you mean, 'think about'? What do you mean, 'Be thinking about'?
RK: What's happening in the world that's important, that people might respond to, take part in or effect.
BD: Well, there's a lot happening in all kinds of different parts of the world. Uh, you know, Europe... if you go through Europe, it's as if people are different there. You know, they think about different things there. As if, you know... in South America they think about different things. The United States, they think about different things. Everything doesn't rotate around the United States any more than, uh, the sun rotates around the world. You know what I mean?
RK: I know what you mean.
BD: Um, so... I don't know.
RK: What are some of the things that you're thinking about.
BD: (Laughing) **What was I thinking about? I don't know. I'm not thinking about... I ain't thinking about doin' anything too, you know... too profound at the moment. I'm just trying to get some... my mind is pretty much focused down on what I'm doin' here at the mom... at the present time. So I haven't really thought about, uh, the Bomb, and the,... uh, you know, the heartache and misery that seems to be swallowing the planet.**
RK: Mm. It'll be there.
BD: Right.
BF: Mm. What are you doing? I mean, could you tell us a little more about the, uh...
BD: Bob Dylan?
BF: ...about the album, besides the name... Yeah, your...
BD: No, there's not much I can tell. I just started working on it, you know. Kinda get it to go right and get it done by the end of the month. So, uhh... I've had to get all my tracks together... You know, it's just the same old thing, Bob. You know what I mean? So, I've been going pretty much full throttle here.
C5: Hello, Bob.
RK: There's a new caller. Speak up and we'll repeat, so Bob can hear.
C5: Hello, Bob. Can you hear me, Bob?
BD: Yeah, barely.
C5: All right. My girlfriend saw you in Australia...
BD: Huh?
C5: My girlfriend saw you and the Heartbreakers in Australia. Is that right?
BD: I can't hear him.
RK: Saw you in Australia with the Heartbreakers.
BD: Yeah.
C5: Were you happy behind that... those shows there in Australia?
RK: Were you happy with those shows?
BD: Uh... was I what?
RK: Were you happy with those shows?
BD: I thought they were good, yeah.
RK: Why do you ask, caller?
C5: I'm just curious, 'cause it was really well received and... I don't know, it seems like Bob's kinda taken on a new vitality, more or less. I mean, he seems to be doing a lot more guitar playing, and he just seems really more charged than he's been in a long time. And I was just wondering if he's sort of changed.
BD: I'm not hearing this caller at all.
RK: He say's you've been doing a lot of good work. You've been playing a lot of guitar. It seems as if you've taken on a new vitality.
BF: And you're more charged.

BD: Oh, well. That's nice to know.
RK: Thank you for calling, and you're on the air.
C6: Can I speak to Bob Dylan, please?
RK: You are.
BF: Go ahead.
RK: Speak loudly.
C6: Hey, Bob.
BF: Go ahead. He's there. He can hear you, or we'll repeat it.
BD: ...or somethin'.
C6: Yeah. Bob Fass is a nudist. Don't you know that?
RK: (laughs). This is WBAI and you're on the air.
C7: Hello, Bob... Hello.
RK: Yes, go ahead. We'll repeat it if he doesn't hear you the first time.
C7: I'd just like to say thanks for many, many years of some great music, and wanted to ask if he would ever find time in his busy schedule to perhaps make an appearance at the, uh... the Clearwater Revival up on Croton-on-The Hudson, for a good cause.
RK: Maybe some day you could come to Croton-on-Hudson for the Clearwater Revival.
BD: Me?
RK: Yeah.
BD: Oh, sure.
RK: OK. WBAI. You're on the air.
C8: Bob? Happy birthday. I thought maybe you'd like to make a few reflections on Phil Ochs.
RK: Mm. Happy birthday and could you reflect on Phil Ochs?
BD: Phil Ochs. Oh, Phil Ochs. Um, well... I think somethin' happened to Phil, you know, when he went to Africa. And, uh, he was sick when he got back from Africa, He was sick for a few years.
BF: Someone tried to choke him.
BD: Messed his mind up also. Um, 'cause I knew him a while before that and, uh, I don't know... he got something... he got sick in Africa, that's about all I can tell you about it. I don't know much more.
RK: You're on the air.
C9: Uh, yeah. Hi, Bob. Happy birthday. I wanna ask you – I heard something... This is Larry Levinstein, you don't know me though... I wanna know, are you doin' a new movie? I heard something about *Hearts Of Fire*.
BD: Oh, is that a... *Hearts Of Fire*?
C9: Something that you were signed up to do – a new movie?
BD: Can you talk just a little bit louder?
C9: Yeah. There's a new movie, as a 60's rock n' roll star.
BD: Oh, yeah.
C9: What's the deal?
BD: I don't know. They asked me to do this movie so I read the script, you know.
C9: Yeah.
BD: And, uh, this part they wanted me to play... well it seemed, uh... I said yeah, I can play that part, you know. I know that character...
C9: Yeah.
BD: So, uh...
BF: Who wrote it?
BD: Hmm... Joe Esterhaz wrote it. He's a pretty good writer, actually. He wrote some other stuff... I've read a story he wrote once. I don't remember when, but I remember I liked it.
C9: Bobby, good luck with it, and thanks for everything. You're terrific.
BD: All right.
C9: Take care.

RK: OK. You're on the air.

C10: Hi, uh, I wanted to ask Bob Dylan a couple of things. One is, what did he mean by "everybody must get stoned". OK? And the other thing is, has he had any good dreams lately?

RK: Two questions for you, Bob. What did you mean when you said "everybody must get stoned", and have you had any good dreams lately? Did you hear that?

BD: What does it mean, "everybody must get stoned"? Yeah. Oh, I'm sorry. What... everybody what? Everybody must get stoned?

RK: Yes. What did you mean by that, and have you had any good dreams lately?

BD: No dreams. Nothing to report there.

RK: Mm, hm.

BD: Um.

RK: So what did you mean?

BD: What did I mean... "everybody must get stoned"... well now, you see that... that's like a... that's just like a... you can sort of make... um, how can you put it? "Everybody must get stoned" is like, uh... you know, when you go against the tide.

RK: Mm, hm.

BD: Um... you, you, uh... you might in different times find yourself in an unfortunate situation and, uh... so to do what you believe in sometimes... people, uh... some people, they just take offence to that. You know... I mean, you can look throughout history and find that people have taken offence to people who... who come out with a different, uh, viewpoint on things. And, um, being stoned is like... it's just a kind of a, um, a way of saying that.

[Some bars of *Rainy Day Women* are played]

What else am I supposed to do here? I gotta get back.

BF: Bobby?

BD: Who is... who am I talking to now?

BF: Well, this is Bob Fass. Robert Knight just played a little snatch of that song, uh...

BD: Listen, Bob Fass. I'm gonna have to go.

BF: Oh, Bob Dylan, thank you very much for talking to us. There are hundreds and thousands of people who are calling us now, and waiting to talk to you, but they'll have to wait until you get to New York...

BD: OK.

BF: ...and, uh, I really am very grateful, and I wanna wish you many, many happy years, man, and thank you for making my years more profound and deeper as I listen to your wonderful, wonderful music.

SB: See you, Bobby.

BD: Bye-bye.

SB: See you. Take care, man. Love you.

BD: All right. You all take care.

BF: Good night. You too man. Bye.

May 1986
Mikal Gilmore interview, Los Angeles, California

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POSITIVELY DYLAN
He recaptures the spirit of 'Highway 61' as he teams up with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers for his biggest tour ever
By Mikal Gilmore

"Subterranean," declares Bob Dylan, smiling with delight.

It is just past midnight, and Dylan is standing in the middle of a crowded, smoke-laden recording studio tucked deep into the remote reaches of Topanga Canyon. He is wearing brown-tinted sunglasses, a sleeveless white T-shirt, black vest, black jeans, frayed black motorcycle boots and fingerless black motorcycle gloves, and he puffs hard at a Kool while bobbing his head rhythmically to the colossal blues shuffle that is thundering from the speakers above his head. Sitting on a sofa a few feet away, also nodding their heads in rapt pleasure, are T-Bone Burnett and Al Kooper – old friends and occasional sidemen of Dylan. Several other musicians – including Los Lobos guitarist Cesar Rosas, R&B saxophonist Steve Douglas and bassist James Jamerson Jr., the son of the legendary Motown bass player – fill out the edges of the room. Like everyone else, they are smiling at this music: romping, bawdy, jolting rock & roll – the sort of indomitable music a man might conjure if he were about to lay claim to something big.

The guitars crackle, the horns honk and wail, the drums and bass rumble and clamor wildly, and then the room returns to silence. T-Bone Burnett, turning to Kooper, seems to voice a collective sentiment. **"Man,"** he says, **"that *gets* it."**

"Yeah," says Kooper. "So *dirty*."

Everyone watches Dylan expectantly. For a moment, he appears to be in some distant, private place. **"Subterranean,"** is all he says, still smiling. **"Positively subterranean,"** he adds, running his hand through his mazy brown hair, chuckling. Then he walks into an adjoining room, straps on his weatherworn Fender guitar, tears off a quick, bristling blues lick and says, **"Okay, who wants to play lead on this? I broke a string."**

Dylan has been like this all week, turning out spur-of-the-moment, blues-infused rock & roll with a startling force and imagination, piling up instrumental tracks so fast that the dazed, bleary-eyed engineers who are monitoring the sessions are having trouble cataloging all the various takes – so far, well over twenty songs, including gritty R&B, Chicago-steeped blues, rambunctious gospel and raw-toned hillbilly forms. In part, Dylan is working fast merely as a practical matter: rehearsals for his American tour with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers start only in a couple of weeks, and though it hardly seems possible in this overmeticulous, high-tech recording era, he figures he can write, record, mix and package a new studio LP in that allotted term. **"You see, I spend too much time working out the sound of my records these days,"** he had told me earlier. **"And if the records I'm making only sell a certain amount anyway, then why should I take so long putting them together?... I've got a lot of different records inside me, and it's time just to start getting them out."**

Apparently, this is not idle talk. Dylan has started perusing songs for a possible collection of new and standard folk songs and has also begun work on a set of Tin Pan Alley covers — which, it seems safe to predict, will be something to hear. At the moment, though, as Dylan leads the assembled band through yet another roadhouse-style blues number, a different ambition seems to possess him. This is Bob Dylan the rock & roller, and despite all the vagaries of his career, it is still an impressive thing to witness. He leans lustily into the song's momentum at the same instant that he invents its structure, pumping his rhythm guitar with tough, unexpected accents, much like Chuck Berry or Keith Richards, and in the process, prodding his

other guitarists, Kooper and Rosas, to tangle and burn, like good-natured rivals. It isn't until moments later, as everybody gathers back into the booth to listen to the playback, that it's clear that this music sounds surprisingly like the riotous, dense music of *Highway 61 Revisited* — music that seems as menacing as it does joyful, and that, in any event, seems to erupt from an ungovernable imagination. Subterranean, indeed.

It was with rock & roll remarkably like this that, more than twenty years ago, Bob Dylan permanently and sweepingly altered the possibilities of both folk music and the pop-song form. In that epoch, the reach of his influence seemed so pervasive, his stance so powerful and mysterious, that he was virtually changing the language and aspirations of popular culture with his every work and gesture. But Dylan barely got started in rock & roll before he got stopped. In the spring of 1966, he was recording *Blonde on Blonde* and playing fiery, controversial electric concerts with his backing band, the Hawks (later renamed the Band); a few months later, he was nearly killed in a motorcycle accident and withdrew from recording and performing for nearly a year and a half.

For many, his music never seemed quite the same after that, and although much of it proved bold and lovely, for about twenty years now Bob Dylan hasn't produced much music that transfigures either pop style or youth culture. To some former fans, that lapse has seemed almost unforgivable. Consequently, Dylan has found himself in a dilemma shared by no other rock figure of his era: he has been sidestepped by the pop world he helped transform, at a time when contemporaries like the Rolling Stones attract a more enthusiastic audience than ever before. This must hurt an artist as scrupulous as Dylan, who, for whatever his lapses, has remained pretty true to both his moral and musical ideals.

In the last couple of years, though, there have been signs that some kind of reclamation might be in the offing. For one thing, there's been his participation in the pop world's recent spate of social and political activism, including his involvement in the USA for Africa and Artists United Against Apartheid projects and his appearance at the Live Aid and Farm Aid programs (the latter, an event inspired by an off-the-cuff remark Dylan had made at Live Aid). More important, there were intriguing indications in 1983's *Infidels* and 1985's *Empire Burlesque* that the singer seems interested in working his way back into the concerns of the real-life modern world — in fact, that he may even be interested in fashioning music that once more engages a pop-wise audience. And, as demonstrated by the strong response to his recent tour of Australia and Japan, as well as to his summer tour of America, there is still an audience willing to be engaged.

Of course, Dylan has his own views about all this talk of decline and renewal. A little later in the evening at the Topanga studio, while various musicians are working on overdubs, he sits in a quiet office, fiddling with one of his ever-present cigarettes and taking occasional sips from a plastic cup filled with white wine. We are discussing a column that appeared in the April issue of *Artforum*, by critic Greil Marcus. Marcus has covered Dylan frequently over the years (he penned the liner notes for the 1975 release of *The Basement Tapes*), but he has been less than compelled by the artist's recent output. Commenting on Dylan's career, and about the recent five-LP retrospective of Dylan's music, *Biograph*, Marcus wrote: "Dylan actually did something between 1963 and 1968, and... what he did then created a standard against which everything he has putatively done since can be measured... The fact that the 1964 '*It Ain't Me, Babe*' can be placed on an album next to the 1974 '*You Angel You*' is a denial of everyone's best hopes."

Dylan seems intrigued by Marcus's comments, but also amused. **"Well, he's right and he's wrong,"** he says. **"I did that accidentally. That was all accidental, as every age is. You're doing something, you don't know what it is, you're just doing it. And later on you'll look at it and..."** His words trail off, then he begins again. **"To me, I don't have a 'career.'... A career is something you can look back on, and I'm not ready to look back. Time doesn't really exist for me in those kinds of terms. I don't really remember in any monumental way 'what I have done.' This isn't my career; this is my life, and it's still vital to me."**

He removes his sunglasses and rubs at his eyes. **"I feel like I really don't want to prove any points,"** he continues. **"I just want to do whatever it is I do. These lyrical things that come off in a unique or a desolate sort of way, I don't know, I don't feel I have to put that out anymore to please anybody. Besides, anything you want to do for posterity's sake, you can just sing into a tape recorder and give it to your mother, you know?"**

Dylan laughs at his last remark. **"See,"** he says, **"somebody once told me — and I don't remember who it was or even where it was — but they said, 'Never give a hundred percent.' My thing has always been just getting by on whatever I've been getting by on. That applies to that time, too, that time in the Sixties. It never really occurred to me that I had to do it for any kind of motive except that I just felt like I wanted to do it. As things worked, I mean, I could never have predicted it."**

I tell him it's hard to believe he wasn't giving a hundred percent on *Highway 61 Revisited* or *Blonde on Blonde*.

He flashes a shy grin and shrugs. **"Well, maybe I was. But there's something at the back of your mind that says, 'I'm not giving you a hundred percent. I'm not giving *anybody* a hundred percent. I'm gonna give you this much, and this much is gonna have to do. I'm good at what I do. I can afford to give you this much and still be as good as, if not better than, the guy over across the street.' I'm not gonna give it all — I'm not Judy Garland, who's gonna die onstage in front of a thousand clowns. If we've learned anything, we should have learned that."**

A moment later an engineer is standing in the doorway, telling Dylan the overdubs are done. **"This is all gonna pass,"** Dylan says before getting up to go back into the studio. **"All these people who say whatever it is I'm supposed to be doing – that's all gonna pass, because, obviously, I'm not gonna be around forever. That day's gonna come when there aren't gonna be any more records, and then people won't be able to say, 'Well this one's not as good as the last one.' They're gonna have to look at it all. And I don't know what the picture will be, what people's judgment will be at that time. I can't help you in that area."**

"Everyone's always saying to me, 'what's Bob Dylan like?'" says Tom Petty a few nights later, seated in the tiny lounge area of a Van Nuys recording studio. Petty and his band, the Heartbreakers, have gathered here to work out material for a forthcoming album and also to help supervise the sound mix for *Bob Dylan in Concert*, the HBO special documenting their recent tour of Australia with Dylan. "It's funny," Petty continues, "but people still attach a lot of mystery to Bob... I think they figure that, since we've spent time around him, we can explain him, as if he's somebody who needs to be explained."

Petty shakes his head. "I mean, Dylan's just a guy like anybody else — except he's a guy who has something to say. And he has a personality that makes it his own. There's not many people that can walk into a room of 20,000, stare at them and get their attention. That's not an easy trick."

Petty may be a little too modest to admit it, but Dylan also has something else going for him these days. A good part of the excitement over Dylan's current U.S. tour owes to the singer's alliance with a band as rousing as the Heartbreakers — a band more given to propulsive rock & roll than any group Dylan has worked with in over a decade. Judging from the HBO special, the Heartbreakers can render the *Highway 61* sound — that unmistakable mix of fiery keyboards and stray-cat guitars — with a convincing flair. Yet rather than simply replicate the sound, the group reinvigorates it and applies it evenly to a broad range of Dylan's music, helping bring a new coherence to his sprawling body of styles. As a result, many of Dylan's more recent songs — such as "When the Night Gomes Falling from the Sky" and "Lenny Bruce" – come across in concert with an uncommon force and conviction, perhaps even a bit more force than some of the older songs.

But Dylan isn't the only one whose music has benefited from this association. Ever since the end of the Australasian tour, Petty and the Heartbreakers seem to be on an inspired streak, cranking out blues-tempered rock and pop songs in the same impromptu fashion that Dylan so

often employs. It isn't so much that the group's new music resembles Dylan's (actually, it suggests nothing so much as the reckless blues of *Exile on Main Street*), but rather that it seems born of the same freewheeling intensity and instinctive ferocity that has marked Dylan's most ambitious efforts.

But there is something more to it — something that belongs only to Petty and the Heartbreakers. I have seen this band on numerous occasions, both in the studio and onstage, and though they've always seemed adept and exciting, they've never struck me as particularly inspired improvisers, in the way, say, that the Rolling Stones or the E Street Band can seem. Now, here they are, jamming with unqualified verve, playing not only head to head but also heart to heart and, in the process, creating what is probably their most inspiring music to date.

"We've never done anything like this before," says Petty, fishing a pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket "It's not like we're even thinking we're making a record... Yet here we are with enough for a double album."

Petty plants a cigarette between his lips, lights it and settles back into the sofa. "Tonight was a good night," he continues. "In fact, this has been a good time for us in general. I think we feel pretty glad to be together."

Though nobody likes to admit it, following the 1982 release of *Long After Dark*, the Heartbreakers more or less dissolved. Petty withdrew into his home, where he was building a state-of-the-art studio and anticipating a solo project; drummer Stan Lynch joined T-Bone Burnett's band for a brief tour; keyboardist Benmont Tench played onstage and in the studio with Lone Justice; guitarist Mike Campbell began experimenting with some new aural textures on a twenty-four-track machine in his basement, where he would eventually compose "The Boys of Summer" for Don Henley; and bassist Howie Epstein did some session work and began assembling material for a possible record of his own.

"It was reaching a point," says Campbell, "where everybody was getting a bit stale with each other, inspirationwise. We just weren't committed as a band." Adds Stan Lynch, "It's like we all faced this ultimate question: If I'm not doing what I do now, what would I do? That's a horrible thing, but we all faced it and realized we wouldn't roll over and die if we lost this gig."

Then, in 1984, inspired by some conversations with Robbie Robertson, Petty came up with an idea that couldn't be realized without the band's contribution. He wanted to make an album about the modern American South — the common homeland that most of the group's members had emerged from but had never quite forgotten. "I'd seen these people I'd grown up around struggling with that experience," Petty had said in an earlier conversation, "with all the things about that legacy they couldn't shake free of, and I think that was tearing at me." The result was *Southern Accents* – a work that examined the conflict between old ways and new ideals and that also aimed to broaden and update the band's musical scope. Though some band members now feel that the record was a bit overworked, they all credit it as a reconciliatory experience. "They've been real supportive of me through this record," Petty says. "I think in the last album we were in a lot of different camps... Now they laugh about *Southern Accents* and its sitars. They had to let me get this out of my system."

Then along came Bob Dylan. He had already employed Tench on *Shot of Love*, and Tench, Campbell and Epstein on Empire Burlesque, and was now looking for an electric band to support him at Farm Aid. When Neil Young, one of the event's organizers, mentioned that Petty and the Heartbreakers had also committed themselves to the show, Dylan decided to ask the group to accompany him. "He called me," says Petty, "and I said, 'Yeah, come over,' and shit, we had a great time. We rehearsed about a week, playing maybe a million different songs. That was one of the best times I ever had. We were blazing. So we went off to Farm Aid and had a great night: the Heartbreakers had a good set, and Bob had a good set But it was over too quick."

Well, not quite. Dylan had been considering offers for a possible Australian tour, but was reluctant to assemble a makeshift band. Plus, the Heartbreakers had just finished their own tour and were firming up their schedules for February. "The next thing I knew," says Petty, "we were doing the Australian tour, and we wanted to do it."

According to some reviews, the tour got off to a shaky start in New Zealand, where the opening-night audiences responded more fervently to Petty's set than Dylan's. But within a few shows, Dylan was storming into such songs as "Clean Cut Kid," "Positively 4th Street," "Rainy Day Women" and "Like a Rolling Stone," often facing off with Campbell and Petty in fierce three-way guitar exchanges and launching suddenly into songs that nobody had rehearsed, and that some band members hardly knew. "One night," recalls Tench, "Dylan turns around and goes,' "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues." 'We'd never played it... At times, that tour sounded like some bizarre mix of the Stooges and Van Morrison."

"There's nothing tentative about Dylan onstage," adds Lynch. "I've seen gigs where the songs have ended in all me wrong places, where it's fallen apart, and it's almost as if, in some perverse way, he gets energy from that chaos."

Dylan can also seem daunting in other ways. "He has more presence than anyone I've ever met," says Mike Campbell. "But when you're working together, you sort of forget about that. Then all of a sudden it will hit you. I mean, I can remember when I was in junior high school: I was in a diner eating a hamburger, and 'Like a Rolling Stone' came on. I got so excited by the song and the lyric I thought, 'There's somebody singing and writing for me.' I went out and got a guitar. I'd forgotten about that until one night in Australia, and I realized, 'This is the first song I ever learned on guitar, and here I am playing it with the person who wrote it'."

Dylan was also the object of much intense feeling in Australia. "I pretty much saw it all," says Lynch. "I saw the girl who slept in the elevator claiming to be his sister from Minnesota; I saw the one who claimed to be his masseuse, who flew in from Perth and was riding up and down the elevator trying to figure out what floor he was on. I also saw the people that were genuinely moved, who felt they had to make some connection with him, that this was an important thing in their life. They wanted to be near him and tell him they're all right, because they probably feel that Bob was telling them that it was going to be all right when they weren't all right, as if Bob knew they weren't doing so well at the time.

"They forget one important thing: Bob doesn't know them; they just know him. But that's all right. That's not shortsightedness on their part. That's just the essence of what people do when you talk to them at a vulnerable time in their lives. It doesn't matter that he was talking to them by way of a record; he was still talking to them."

Two weeks later, Bob Dylan sits on a dogeared sofa in the Van Nuys studio where Petty is working, sipping at a plastic cup full of whiskey and water. He blows a curt puff of smoke and broods over it. His weary air reminds me of something he'd said earlier: **"Man, sometimes it seems I've spent half my life in a recording studio... It's like living in a coal mine."**

Dylan and Petty have been holed up in this room the better part of the night, working on a track called "Got My Mind Made Up," which they have co-written for Dylan's album. By all appearances, it's been a productive session: the tune is a walloping, Bo Diddley-like raveup with Delta blues-style slide guitar, and Dylan has been hurling himself into the vocal with a genuinely staggering force. Yet there's also a note of tension about the evening. The pressure of completing the album has reportedly been wearing on Dylan, and his mood is said to have been rather dour and unpredictable these last several days. In fact, somewhere along the line he has decided to put aside most of the rock & roll tracks he had been working on in Topanga, and is apparently now assembling the album from various sessions that have accrued over the last year. **"It's all sorts of stuff,"** he says. **"It doesn't really have a theme or a purpose."**

While waiting for his backup singers to arrive, Dylan tries to warm up to the task of the evening's interview. But in contrast to his manner in our earlier conversation, he seems somewhat distracted, almost edgy, and many questions don't seem to engender much response. After a bit, I ask him if he can tell me something about the lyrical tenor of the songs. "Got My Mind Made Up," for example, includes a reference to Libya. Will this be a record that has something to say about our national mood?

He considers the subject. **"The kinds of stuff I write now come out over all the years I've lived,"** he says, **"so I can't say anything is really that current. There may be one line that's current... But you have to go on. You can't keep doing the same old thing all the time."**

I try a couple more questions about political matters — about whether he feels any kinship with the new activism in pop music – but he looks exhausted at the possibility of seriously discussing the topic. **"I'm opposed to whatever oppresses people's intelligence,"** he says. **"We all have to be against that sort of thing, or else we have nowhere to go. But that's not a fight for one man, that's everybody's fight."**

Over the course of our interviews, I've learned you can't budge him on a subject if he's not in the mood, so I move on. We chat a while, but nothing much seems to engage him until I ask if he's pleased by the way the American public is responding to the upcoming tour. Demand has been so intense that the itinerary has been increased from twenty-six to forty shows, with more dates likely. In the end, it's estimated drat he'll play to a million people.

"People forget it," he says, **"but since 1974, I've never stopped working. I've been out on tours where there hasn't been any publicity. So for me, I'm not getting caught up in all this excitement of a big tour. I've played big tours and I've played small tours. I mean, what's such a big deal about this one?"**

Well, it is his first cross-country tour of America in eight years.

"Yeah, but to me, an audience is an audience, no matter where they are. I'm not particularly into this American thing, this Bruce Springsteen-John Cougar-'America first' thing. I feel just as strongly about the American principles as those guys do, but I personally feel that what's important is more eternal things. This American pride thing, that don't mean nothing to me. I'm more locked into what's real forever."

Quickly, Dylan seems animated. He douses one cigarette, lights another and begins speaking at a faster clip. **"Listen,"** he says, **"I'm not saying anything bad about these guys, because I think Bruce has done a tremendous amount for real gutbucket rock & roll – and folk music, in his own way. And John Cougar's great, though the best thing on his record, I thought, was his grandmother singing. That knocked me out. But that ain't what music's about. Subjects like 'How come we don't have our jobs?' Then you're getting political. And if you want to get political, you ought to go as far out as you can."**

But certainly he understands that Springsteen and Mellencamp aren't exactly trying to fan the flames of American pride. Instead, they're trying to say that if the nation loses sight of certain principles, it also forfeits its claim to greatness.

"Yeah? What are those principles? Are they Biblical principles? The only principles you can find are the principles in the Bible. I mean, Proverbs has got them all."

They are such principles, I say, as justice and equality.

"Yeah, but..." Dylan pauses. As we've been talking, others — including Petty, Mike Campbell, the sound engineers and the backup singers — have entered the room. Dylan stands up and starts pacing back and forth, smiling. It's hard to tell whether he is truly irked or merely spouting provocatively for the fun of it After a moment, he continues. **"To me, America means the Indians. They were here and this is their country, and all the white men are just trespassing. We've devastated the natural resources of this country, for no particular reason except to make money and buy houses and send our kids to college and shit like that To me, America is the Indians, period. I just don't go for nothing more. Unions, movies, Greta Garbo, Wall Street, Tin Pan Alley or Dodgers baseball games."** He laughs. **"It don't mean shit. What we did to the Indians is disgraceful. I think America, to get right, has got to start there first."**

I reply that a more realistic way of getting right might be to follow the warning of one of his own songs, "Clean Cut Kid," and not send our young people off to fight in another wasteful war.

"Who sends the young people out to war?" says Dylan. **"Their parents do."**

But it isn't the parents who suited them up and put them on the planes and sent them off to die in Vietnam.

"Look, the parents could have said, 'Hey, we'll talk about it.' But parents aren't into that They don't know how to deal with what they should do or shouldn't do. So they leave it to the government."

Suddenly, loudly, music blares up in the room. Perhaps somebody — maybe Petty — figures the conversation is getting a little too tense. Dylan smiles and shrugs, then pats me on the shoulder. **"We can talk a little more later,"** he says.

For the next couple of hours, Dylan and Petty attend to detail work on the track — getting the right accent on a ride cymbal and overdubbing the gospel-derived harmonies of the four female singers who have just arrived. As always, it is fascinating to observe how acutely musical Dylan is. In one particularly inspired offhand moment, he leads the four singers — Queen Esther Morrow, Elisecia Wright, Madelyn Quebec and Carol Dennis -through a lovely a cappella version of "White Christmas," then moves into a haunting reading of an old gospel standard, "Evening Sun." Petty and the rest of us just stare, stunned. "Man," says Petty frantically, "we've got to get this on tape."

Afterward, Dylan leads me out into a lounge area to talk some more. He leans on top of a pinball machine, a cigarette nipped between his teeth. He seems calmer, happy with the night's work. He also seems willing to finish the conversation we were having earlier, so we pick up where we left off! What would he do, I ask, if his own sons were drafted?

Dylan looks almost sad as he considers the question. After several moments, he says: **"They could do what their conscience tells them to do, and I would support them. But it also depends on what the government wants your children to do. I mean, if the government wants your children to go down and raid Central American countries, there would be no moral value in that I also don't drink we should have bombed those people in Libya."** Then he flashes one of those utterly guileless, disarming smiles of his as our talk winds down. **"But what I want to know,"** he says, **"is, what's all this got to do with folk music and rock & roll?"**

Quite a bit, since he, more than any other artist, raised the possibility that folk music and rock & roll could have political impact. **"Right,"** says Dylan, **"and I'm proud of that."**

And the reason questions like these keep coming up is because many of us aren't so sure where he stands these days – in fact, some critics have charged that, with songs like "Slow Train" and "Union Sundown," he's even moved a bit to the right.

Dylan muses over the remark in silence for a moment. **"Well, for me,"** he begins, **"there is no right and there is no left. There's truth and there's untruth, y'know? There's honesty and there's hypocrisy. Look in the Bible: you don't see nothing about right or left. Other people might have other ideas about things, but I don't, because I'm not that smart I hate to keep beating people over the head with the Bible, but that's the only instrument I know, the only thing that stays true."**

Does it disturb him that there seem to be so many preachers these days who claim that to be a good Christian one must also be a political conservative?

"Conservative? Well, don't forget, Jesus said that it's harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than it is for a camel to enter the eye of a needle. I mean, is that conservative? I don't know, I've heard a lot of preachers say how God wants everybody to be wealthy and healthy. Well, it doesn't say drat in the Bible. You can twist anybody's words, but that's only for fools and people who follow fools. If you're entangled in the snares of this world, which everybody is..."

Petty comes into the room and asks Dylan to come hear the final overdubs. Dylan likes what he hears, then decides to take one more pass at the lead vocal. This time, apparently, he nails it. "Don't ever try to change me/I been in this thing too long/There's nothing you can say or do/ To make me think I'm wrong," he snarls at the song's outset, and while it is hardly the most inviting line one has ever heard him sing, tonight he seems to render it with a fitting passion.

It is midnight in Hollywood, and Bob Dylan, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers are clustered in a cavernous room at the old Zoetrope Studios, working out a harmonica part to "License to

Kill," when Dylan suddenly begins playing a different, oddly haunting piece of music. Gradually, the random tones he is blowing begin to take a familiar shape, and it becomes evident that he's playing a plaintive, bluesy variation of "I Dreamed I Saw St Augustine." Benmont Tench is the first to recognize me melody, and quickly embellishes it with a graceful piano part; Petty catches the drift and underscores Dylan's harmonica with some strong, sharp chord strokes. Soon, the entire band, which tonight includes guitarist Al Kooper, is seizing Dylan's urge and transforming the song into a full and passionate performance. Dylan never sings the lyrics himself but instead signals a backup singer to take the lead, and immediately "I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine" becomes a full-fledged, driving spiritual.

Five minutes later, the moment has passed. According to Petty and Tench, Dylan's rehearsals are often like this: inventive versions of wondrous songs come and go and are never heard again, except in those rare times when they may be conjured onstage. In a way, an instance like this leaves one wishing that every show in the current True Confessions Tour were simply another rehearsal: Dylan's impulses are so sure-handed and imaginative, they're practically matchless.

Trying to get Dylan to talk about where such moments come from – or trying to persuade him to take them to die stage – is, as one might expect, not that easy. **"I'm not sure if people really want to hear that sort of thing from me,"** he says, smiling ingenuously. Then he perches himself on an equipment case and puts his hands into his pockets, looking momentarily uncomfortable. Quickly, his face brightens. **"Hey,"** he says, pulling a tape from his pocket, **"wanna hear the best album of the year?"** He holds a cassette of *AKA Graffiti Man*, an album by poet John Trudell and guitarist Jesse Ed Davis. **"Only people like Lou Reed and John Doe can dream about doing work like this. Most don't have enough talent."**

Dylan has his sound engineer cue the tape to a song about Elvis Presley. It is a long, stirring track about the threat that so many originally perceived in Presley's manner and the promise so many others discovered in his music. "We heard Elvis's song for the first time/Then we made up our own mind," recites Trudell at one point, followed by a lovely, blue guitar solo from Davis that quotes "Love Me Tender." Dylan grins at the line, then shakes his head with delight. **"Man,"** he says, **"that's about all anybody ever needs to say about Elvis Presley."**

I wonder if Dylan realizes that the line could also have been written about him – that millions of us heard his songs, and that those songs not only inspired our own but, in some deep-felt place, almost seemed to be our own. But before there is even time to raise the question, Dylan has put on his coat and is on his way across the room.

"I'm thinking about calling this album *Knocked Out Loaded*," Bob Dylan says. He repeats the phrase once, then chuckles over it. **"Is that any good, you think, *Knocked Out Loaded*?"**

Dylan and a recording engineer are seated at a mixing board at the Topanga recording studio, poring over a list of song tides and talking about possible sequences. Dylan seems downright affable, more relaxed than earlier in the week. Apparently, the album has fallen into place with sudden ease. In the last few days, he has narrowed the record's selections down to a possible nine or ten songs, and tonight he is polishing two of those tracks and attempting a final mix on a couple of others.

So far, it all sounds pretty good – not exactly the back-snapping rock & roll I'd heard a few weeks earlier but, in a way, something no less bold. Then Dylan plays one more track, "Brownsville Girl," a piece he wrote last year with playwright Sam Shepard. A long, storylike song, it begins with a half-drawled, half-sung remembrance about a fateful scene from a western the singer had once seen, then opens up from there into two or three intersecting, dreamlike tales about pursued love and forsaken love, about fading heroes and forfeited ideals — about hope and death. It's hard to tell where Dylan ends and Shepard begins in the lyrics, but it is quite easy to hear whom the song really belongs to. In fact, I've only known of one man who could put across a performance as exhilarating as this one, and he is sitting there right in front of me, concentrating hard on the tale, as if he too were hearing its wondrous

involutions for the first time. If this is the way Bob Dylan is going to age as a songwriter, I decide, I'm happy to age with him.

Twelve minutes later, the song closes with a glorious, explosive chorus. I don't know exactly what to say, so Dylan picks up the slack. He lights a cigarette, moves over to the sofa, takes off his glasses and smiles a shy smile. **"You know,"** he says, **"sometimes I think about people like T-Bone Walker, John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters — these people who played into their sixties. If I'm here at eighty, I'll be doing the same thing. This is all I want to do — it's all I can do. I mean, you don't have to be a nineteen – or twenty-year-old to play this stuff That's the vanity of that youth-culture ideal. To me that's never been the thing. I've never really aimed myself at any so-called youth culture. I directed it at people who I imagined, maybe falsely so, had the same experiences that I've had, who have kind of been through what I'd been through. But I guess a lot of people just haven't."**

He falls silent for a moment, taking a drag off his cigarette. **"See,"** he says, **"I've always been just about being an individual, with an individual point of view. If I've been about anything, it's probably that, and to let some people know that it's possible to do the impossible."**

Dylan leans forward and snuffs out his cigarette. **"And that's really all. If I've ever had anything to tell anybody, it's that: You can do the impossible. *Anything* is possible. And that's it. No more."**

14 June 1986
Jon Bream Interview, Berkeley, California

Source: *Rolling Telegraph Supplement*, issue 5, p. 24.

Minneapolis Star and Tribune, Sunday, June 22, 1986.

THE MANY FACES OF BOB DYLAN
He takes off his mask before bringing his show back home
By Jon Bream/Staff Writer

Berkeley, Calif.
Bob Dylan strides through the long lobby of the Claremont Resort hotel wearing his game face. His customary sunglasses are missing. Yet, even without that mask, it's hard to predict which Dylan will surface an hour later in concert at the Greek Theater.

Poet laureate? Political rebel? Folkie? Rocker? Visionary prophet? Blasphemer? Christian? Jew?

It turns out to be a free-wheeling Bob Dylan: animated, talkative, jocular, Intense, passionate. The many sides of Dylan are evident as he proves to be a genuine soul singer — not in the R&B sense, but in terms of singing with his heart and soul — and an unabashed music fan. Backed by the simpatico Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers plus four gospel-trained singers, Dylan interprets numbers by Ray Charles, Lefty Frizzell and Ricky Nelson, recasts his own classics including "*Positively Fourth Street*" and "*Like a Rolling Stone*" and sprinkles in a handful of tunes from his most recent albums.

Neil Young is backstage after the concert. So is Annie Sampson, a former singer with the Bay Area R&B band Stoneground; she wants to give her old friend Dylan a tape of her current work. A former Dylan employee and her husband also stop by to chat with the singer in his dressing room.

"This is what happens when I stick around after," Dylan says to a visiting journalist after the well-wishers have left. **"So what's happening in Minneapolis?"**

"People are getting excited about your show at the Metrodome with the (Grateful) Dead," the visitor says. "It'll be the first actual concert at the Dome — you've been to Twins games there. There have been concerts in association with sporting events but no full-scale concerts. And this will also be your first concert in Minnesota in nine years."

"No. Didn't I come there on the last tour (in '83)**?"**

"No. And not on the 'religious' tour ('80). You got as close as Omaha."

"They're all religious tours," Dylan says with a sly smile. **"This one's called the True Confessions Tour."**

The superstar's game face is gone. He's joking and jiving. There are none of the usual fronts or masks he puts on for journalists. So the visitor tells the Hibbing-bred singer that he was recently named to the all-Hibbing basketball team by pro basketball star Kevin McHale. who also grew up in Hibbing.

"I can't play," says Dylan with a cup of Jim Beam bourbon and water in his hand. **"Who's my substitute?"**

(The next day, McHale says, **"There is no substitute for Bob Dylan."**)

Dylan climbs into a plain van — not even tinted windows — with his teen-age son Sam (one of his six children), his acupuncturist and a few other assistants to head for his second concert at the Greek Theater. Someone hands a cassette tape to the visiting journalist. **"It's my new album,"** says Dylan. **"Don't tell anyone where you got it. Just give it back to Gary** (Dylan's valet) **tonight."**

The van pulls into the Greek Theater. Unlike most places where rock concerts are held, this amphitheater offers no backstage entrance, so the van must crawl through a crowd to reach the backstage area. Dylan suggests everybody get out and walk.

The van doors open and the riders hop out. The pool of people parts like the Red Sea did for Moses.

"Hi, Bob," shouts one fan.

"Great show last night," yells another.

A young woman runs up and embraces Dylan, who cooperates reluctantly, then continues walking — down the stairs to the dressing room.

The sunglasses, blue jeans and motorcycle boots come off. Dylan slips into his leather pants, white socks and Beetle boots. His wardrobe assistant shows him how to tie the decorative laces on the seams of the pants around his boots.

"I need a scarf," he tells her. **"It's going to be windy tonight, right? My head gets wet. How 'bout that red one?"**

She fetches a red plaid scarf from a wardrobe trunk, and he ties it around his head and looks into a mirror. The assistant suggests a hat. They compromise by tying the scarf around the singer's neck.

But first, he needs a shirt. She proffers a white basketball undershirt. He holds it up, pronounces it **"OK"** and then asks for something else to wear over it. They settle on a black leather vest.

Dylan pours himself a Jim Beam and water and asks, **"What time it is?"**

—

Bob Dylan spent his first 19 years in Minnesota. He was born in Duluth, moved to Hibbing when he was 5 or 6 and later attended the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis for a year. He maintains homes in New York and California, and he gets back to Minnesota two or three times a year, he says; his mother lives in St. Paul and his brother in a Minneapolis exurb.

What does Minnesota mean to this famous native son?

"The trees and the lakes and the clouds." he says. **"And when I was growing up, the trains."**

When Dylan started recording for Columbia Records in 1962 he never figured he would have the impact and influence he has had on the intellectual and artistic fabric of his times. He says he doesn't spend much time acknowledging that significance, but ponders the subject **"just in passing moments."**

His 28 albums have sold more than 35 million copies and his songs have been recorded by thousands of singers, but Dylan hasn't had a hit song or a best selling record in the 1980s. It doesn't bother him that he's no longer in the forefront of popular music.

"There is a myth in the music business that you need to be platinum and double platinum (with sales of million and 2 million albums)**,"** he says. **"Neil Diamond doesn't sell** (records)**, but how many nights did he play in the** (St. Paul) **Civic Center? Two? Three?** (Diamond played two concerts there last December.)**"**

"Music is a live thing," Dylan says. **"On records, it's something else. For me, it's always of the moment. It always adapts to your character of the moment. That's why I can't get away from it."**

On his 1980 tour Dylan shocked his fans by performing a concert of entirely new, gospel-flavored material and eschewing two decades' worth of songs that had made him famous. He says he has no problem singing songs like "*Blowin' in the Wind*" and "*The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll*" that he wrote more than 20 years ago.

"They're not old songs if you're still singing them," he says. ***""The Star Spangled Banner"*** **– now that's an old song. So is, uh, *"Auld Lang Syne"*."**

Dylan's legions and social commentators have long made much ado about his religious views. Is he a born-again Christian or is he reasserting his Judaism, the religion in which he was raised? It seems he has had a strong interest in spirituality and then pursued studies from the perspective of different religious groups.

When did his interest in spirituality start?

"Before I was born," he says. He was introduced to the Bible in grade school and he has been reading it regularly ever since.

On this occasion he is shying away, for the most part, from the long, philosophical and often cryptic answers with which he has been known to confound interviewers. He might cite a line from a Neil Young song or a quote from a James Taylor interview to illustrate his point, but mostly he is direct and straightforward.

After all these years, what motivates him?

He contemplates the question. **"Not greed, I hope."** He ponders for a moment. **"Righteous instincts."**

26 June 1986
Bob Ashenmacher Interview, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 277-280.

Dylan talks with Ashenmacher about the old times in Minnesota. The interview took place backstage prior to the concert at the Minneapolis Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome on June 26th. The *News-Tribune & Herald* carrying this interview was published in Duluth on June 29th 1986.

Dylan talks
His images of the North are faint but fond

MINNEAPOLIS – Yes, Bob Dylan returns to his native northern Minnesota for visits. No, he didn't feel like an outcast in the days when he rode a motorcycle and had the plug pulled on his rock n' roll band at a Hibbing High School talent show.

And about last weeks short lived Duluth City Council proposal to name a Duluth street after him, he's puzzled and amused.

Dylan spoke freely about his youth on the Iron Range in a backstage conversation before his concert Thursday night in the Metrodome in Minneapolis. He was born Robert Zimmerman 45 years ago in Duluth, and raised in Hibbing from age 6. He left after high school graduation in 1959.

Through more than 20 years in the forefront of American music, Dylan has granted interviews infrequently. More than once he has given brooding, elliptical responses rather than straightforward answers.

A different Dylan talked plainly Thursday night. He spoke to the *News-Tribune & Herald* primarily because of the efforts of a close friend of his who lives in Duluth. The friend said he wanted Dylan's fondness for Duluth and the Iron Range to become known.

The backstage area was quiet. Dylan appeared from a room sectioned off by sheets hanging from the ceiling.

He wore the same outfit he would wear onstage, minus a leather vest: a blue sleeveless shirt, black leather pants with silver studs up the sides and Beatle boots. Close up, his eyes are very blue. His build is thin, almost slight. His handshake is dry, the grasp gentle. The conversation was conducted sitting atop a musical instrument trunk in the room behind the sheet. Dylan eschewed small talk. He avoided direct eye contact at first and appeared uncomfortable, even irritable. When he began hearing some old names, remembering some old impressions, he seemed to begin enjoying himself.

BA: It's surprising you wanted to talk to the Duluth newspaper. You're not talking to any others now that this tour is under way.

BD: Don't you want me to? I can go. I really can. I mean, I got things to do. I thought you wanted to speak to me.

BA: But is there something you wanted to say specifically to Duluth and the Iron Range?

BD: No, nothin'. Nothin'. (He paused, seemed to soften a bit) **It's just really hard going, here, with all these one-night stands.**

BA: Have you heard about this Bob Dylan Drive idea in Duluth?

BD: Yeah, I've heard about it.

BA: What do you think?

BD: (Pause) **I really don't know what to think. I would think there'd be a lot of other people in Duluth they could name streets for.** (He laughed a little)**. I think everybody who was born there should have a street named for them. I don't remember much about Duluth really, except, uh, the foghorns.** (He plucked at one of the hanging sheets, glanced into an empty adjacent room)**. That's about it.**

BA: Did you come down to Duluth from the Range much as a kid?

BD: I saw Buddy Holly there, actually. I saw a few bands in Duluth, but there weren't that many clubs happening. People who played back then usually just did it in their house.

BA: Do you remember any musicians from the Range or Duluth?

BD: There was a guy who used to live in our duplex in Hibbing named Chuckle Solberg, who a few years ago was playing piano with (a national act)**. And some other people from Minnesota I remember. I run into people from Minnesota in the strangest places actually.**

BA: What was the Range music scene like when you were growing up?

BD: Back then it was mainly polka bands. If you went to a club it was more like a tavern scene, with a polka band. There was country music, too, that I remember. My girlfriend, Echo was her name – Echo Helstrom – her father played guitar.

BA: She lives in Los Angeles now. Do you ever hear from her?

BD: (He smiled) **I see her occasionally.**

BA: Was she the "Girl from the North Country"?

BD: (He smiled wider and said) **Well, she's a North Country girl through and through.** (He laughed. It was a nice laugh. It sounded kind).

BA: They say she was free-spirited.

BD: Mm-hm, she was just like me.

BA: Do you remember Bill Marinac?

BD: He's a string bass player. We played together. Charles Nara, he was our drummer. We had a good guitar player in that band, Monty Edwardson.

BA: People always wonder – do you ever come back?

BD: I do sometimes, in, you know, odd moments. When I'm passin' through.

BA: Once a year, maybe?

BD: Up to the Range, there? No, I don't get up there as often as that. Duluth, a little bit more often, but, you know, I haven't spent any great amount of time there.

BA: Do you like that you can visit and have it be low-key, not a bunch of fans pestering you?

BD: Yeah, it's nice when that happens.

BA: Local legend has it that at the Hibbing High Jacket Jamboree someone cut the electricity on your band because you were so loud.

BD: Yeah, I wasn't very popular when I was there. (He laughed)**. I don't remember that, but it could've happened.**

BA: Did people sometimes not understand what you were doing?

BD: Nah, we were just the loudest band around, it was mostly that. What we were doing, there wasn't anybody else around doing. (The music scene) **was mostly horn kind of stuff, jazz – there was one other band in town with trumpet, bass, guitar and drums. Mostly that type of stuff. And you had to play polkas.**

BA: Did you actually play polkas?

BD: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

BA: It seems in recent years you're less guarded about discussing things like this.

BD: Well, nobody really asked me about it. Nobody much asks people where they come from or what they're doing while they're growing up, so...

BA: When you started to get successful in New York, did the national press romanticize your past in Minnesota?

BD: I don't really know. I don't know what they did.
BA: You didn't read it?
BD: Um, I didn't really keep up with it all.
BA: Could you ever see having a summer home in northern Minnesota, out in the woods somewhere?
BD: Yeah (he chuckled)**. Who couldn't imagine that?**
BA: That's be neat.
BD: It would be.
BA: Well, Kevin McHale does it.
BD: Yeah, I saw Kevin out there (at the concert) **just now.**
BA: There's a great story about him seeing you at a Celtics game.
BD: He did, he came right out into the crowd and shook my hand. That was an amazing thing to do.
BA: Do you ever listen to Garrison Keillor?
BD: A few years ago I used to listen to him. I like his show. I've always liked it.
BA: Does it ever make you homesick for Minnesota?
BD: Well, ah... yeah, it does. Well, I don't get homesick for those kind of things he's talkin' about because, ah, I don't know if my upbringing was like that. But I get homesick for where it all happened.
BA: Everyone says it was a very warm home you and your brother, David, were brought up in.
BD: Well, we had a big family, like a big extended family. My grandmother had about 17 kids on the one side, and on the other side about 13 kids. So there was always a lot of family-type people around.
BA: Were you kind of an outcast when you were growing up? That's part of the myth.
BD: I really couldn't say (He laughed). **To me I was perfectly right.**

29 June 1986
Detroit Free Press, Mike Campbell comments

Source: *TWM* #994

"During one show in Australia, we were supposed to do '*When the Night Comes Falling from the Sky,*' and (Dylan) didn't feel like doing it," Campbell remembers. "He turned around to me and said, **'You know the chords for 'All Along the Watchtower,' don't you,'** and we'd never rehearsed it. I said, 'There's only three, right?' And he said, **'Yeah. Let's go.'**

"You never know what's coming," Campbell says. "There'll be different songs, or we'll do the same songs in different keys. It reminds me of a high school dance band; it's more polished, maybe, but it has that looseness, that freshness, that, uh — chaos.

July or August 1986
Ian & Sylvia Message, CBC-TV

Source: *Circulating tape*

Ian and Sylvia, I wish I could be whereev… there where you are tonight, but I can't be. So I wish you good luck anyway and hope to see you soon.

17 July 1986
David Hepworth Interview,
Madison Square Gardens, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1057-1068.

July 15th to the 17th 1986, Dylan performed three shows at Madison Square Garden, New York. Before the third show, Dylan was interviewed by David Hepworth from *Q* magazine. The article was printed in *Q* in October 1986. Quoting from Heylin (*A Life In Stolen Moments*) – Dylan has little to say and apparently complains afterward that **"The guy keeps asking me questions."**

There's a lot of non-interview material here, but I've included it 'cause it makes rather interesting background reading. I'm afraid I'm not enamoured with the interviewer who imposes far too many of his own personal feelings. However, completeness dictates...

THE INVISIBLE MAN

Feted, imitated, slated and overrated, the world's least worldly rock star is 45 this year and in danger of being mythologised into extinction. David Hepworth met Bob Dylan – and all the little Dylans – in New York.

The man in the denim jacket hugs the battered guitar further into his chest and launches into the final verse of *Shelter From The Storm*, the backlighting picking out every starpoint of his tangled hair as he sings of beauty walking a razor's edge and pipes out a final solo on the harmonica attached around his neck. Awkwardly acknowledging the audience's applause he hops off the small, low stage. As he walks through the crowd people offer their muttered congratulations.

"Great, Bob."

"You did real good. Bob."

"Bob, thanks for everything."

The master of ceremonies takes the mike: "A big hand, ladies and gentlemen, for the legendary Bob Dylan."

Pause.

"And now, would you welcome to the stage, the one, the only... Bob Dylan!"

With a sweep of his arm he indicates a fair-haired man in glasses. This character is so small he's having trouble hoisting his backside on to the tall stool without dropping his guitar. The crowd stiffens. Bob Dylan is five feet, tops. And, yes, he's going to sing *Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues*...

THIS IS THE FIFTH annual Bob Dylan imitators contest, taking place in a Greenwich Village club called The Speakeasy. Entries are invited in six categories: folk-protest, amphetamine-rock, post-motorcycle accident, born again, freestyle and contemporary. Here on MacDougal Street they know their Dylan. When he first arrived in New York he headed like a homing pilgrim straight for the corner of Bleecker and MacDougal, making his reputation at The Gaslight, Café Rienzi, Gerde's Folk City and the other Village clubs and coffee houses, some of which still cluster around that holy intersection.

That was a quarter of a century ago. Tonight the "contemporary" Bob Dylan is midtown with Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers, playing the second of a three night engagement at Madison Square Garden, an ice-hockey facility that seats 22,000. Earlier that evening in his dressing room I'd mentioned the contest to him, saying I intended to drop by. He shook his head.

"It's crazy, isn't it? How would you feel if they were doing that about you?"

This is not something I often consider, Bob, but, well, flattered at first and then maybe a bit spooked. Don't you like the flattery?

"No, because you do get spooked by it and so you can't afford to get flattered by it. You can get trapped if you fall victim to flattery."

It would have been hard to persuade Bob Dylan that there was more affection for the spirit of his music in that cramped little alternative comedy joint than there had been in the gusty reaches of the Garden. The Speakeasy audience may have been traditionalists to the point of pedantry – applauding a particularly well-observed imitation of Dylan's harmonica work on *Just Like A Woman* and clicking their tongues in disapproval when a competitor tried to pass off *Bringing It All Back Home* material with *Nashville Skyline* intonation – but they were probably having a better time than those who'd paid twenty dollars and more to watch a distant silhouette act out the fiction of his rebirth for the umpteenth time.

BOB DYLAN came off his motorbike the difficult way on July 29th 1966. That's twenty years ago. George Michael was in nappies. Every live performance he's undertaken since then has been greeted as the beginning of a Return to Form. The 1986 True Confessions tour of America and Australasia – for even Dylan tours have brand names these days – is no exception.

Critics claim that his alliance with The Heartbreakers has magically invoked what Dylan called the "wild mercury sound" of *Blonde On Blonde*. In actual fact they no more resemble the men who played on *Obviously Five Believers* than the Smiths do. Instead they sound like many of the line-ups Dylan has taken on the road since he ceased working with The Band – loud, approximate and confused.

This is not necessarily their fault. Dylan is notorious for refusing to articulate what he wants. The musicians who worked with him in Dave Stuart's North London studio late last year were amazed that anyone could spend two weeks leading a band without feeling the need to give instructions from time to time. Eric Clapton, an old friend, simply watches his hands for the changes and hopes for the best.

Ronnie Wood recalls the day before Live Aid when he and Keith Richards sat around with Dylan trying to familiarize themselves with his material. Dozens of songs were picked out and arranged. The next day, just a matter of minutes before they were due to follow Mick Jagger and Tina Turner on stage in front of the world's largest television audience, Dylan announced that they would begin with *The Ballad Of Hollis Brown*. This was one of the few numbers they hadn't rehearsed.

Ronnie hadn't even heard it: "I thought, *Hollis Brown*? That's cough medicine, isn't it?" The rest you know.

IN STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL TERMS Dylan had no more right to top that Philadelphia bill than the Hooters. Last year in New York CBS presented him with an award for lifetime's sales of 35,000,000 records. Respectable, but no more. Michael Jackson has sold more copies of *Thriller* alone than Bob Dylan has of his thirty albums over twenty five years. And yet when

Jack Nicholson used the adjective "transcendent" you know you weren't about to see Cyndi Lauper.

The three song shambles that followed would have finished most people's careers. Dylan claims never to have had one. Then he compounded the debacle by suggesting that some of the money raised by the event should be diverted to the over-mortgaged farmers of the mid-West. To the British artists sitting watching the American telecast on a large screen in a West End nightclub this seemed like typically tasteless isolationism. Picking his words carefully, Bob Geldof later commented: "I find it hard to get as concerned about people losing their livelihoods as I do about people losing their lives."

Nevertheless Dylan's remarks mustered the American musical community in a way that Band Aid and Live Aid had never quite managed. Headed up by Willie Nelson, Neil Young and John Cougar Mellencamp, Farm Aid was set to climax with a September concert in Champaign, Illinois. Obviously keen to avoid another Live Aid debacle, Dylan decided he needed a band, preferably a well-rehearsed one. He'd already worked with various Heartbreakers, notably keyboard player Benmont Tench, and the fact that his manager Elliott Roberts had recently gone into partnership with Tony Dimitriades, Petty's manager, made the liason easier to contemplate. They rehearsed together for a week and successfully closed out Farm Aid. (The event raised barely enough money to pay off one day's interest on the debts accrued by American farmers; however it was instrumental in drawing national attention to their plight).

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS TOUR should not have been the box office hit it was. Dylan's last US tour, undertaken in 1981, was not a great success. Eschewing all the old favorites, he stuck largely to songs that reflected his conversion to Evangelical Christianity. Experience suggests that Your Average Rock Fan can put up with devil worship but tends to draw the line at the old rugged cross.

Dylan wasn't being coy about it either; he thumped that bible till the dust reached the rafters. He was shaken by how violently supposedly educated audiences reacted to songs which in his view were simply direct descendants of *Masters Of War* or *I Shall Be Released*, not to mention *Father Of Night* or *Knockin' On Heaven 's Door*. What did these people think he'd been singing about all these years if it wasn't moral conflict and the prospect of salvation?

Dylan puts up a good show of not understanding the extent to which the music industry intercedes in his art. Ask him what draws a million people to buy tickets for this 40-date tour and he'll profess complete bewilderment. This pretence of ignorance is his strong shield against criticism and pressure. There he is, playing New York City on the very day his new record, *Knocked Out Loaded*, hits the stores. There he is, playing for the best part of three hours in front of 22,000 people and the assembled brass of his record company and how many runes does he play from this new release? Not one.

"Not even a mention," moans a CBS employee backstage.

Oh, he found room for Ricky Nelson's *Lonesome Town* and ancient gospel corn like *That Lucky Old Sun* but apparently wasn't ready to play *Brownsville Girl* or any of the other tracks that the American press were dutifully hailing as a Return To Form. (He'd probably read the CBS handout calling *Brownsville Girl* "a masterpiece"; all Bob Dylan songs of more than five minutes duration are "masterpieces")

Bob Dylan has been signed to this record company for more than twenty five years. Twenty five years of advances, options, tour support and artwork approval. He's been with CBS longer than the vast majority of their employees. He may not sell the amount of product that Michael or

Bruce or Barbra or even Journey shift but nevertheless the Company President Walter Yetnikoff makes sure he's there at the Garden with his flexible friend, ready to take Dylan and a party of twenty to a swank East Side restaurant after the show.

I feel for Yetnikoff. He spends most of his time arguing over video production expenses and Japanese twelve inch single royalties with a succession of private plane-piloting, currency-dealing, Armani-wearing, aluminium briefcase-owning artists and their managers; then twice a year he has to sit down with this smokey old gipsy who isn't remotely interested in releasing singles, shrivels up at the thought of going on the radio or TV and only ever approves pictures of himself in which his eyes are closed. It can't be easy.

(Elliott Roberts discussing possible Italian TV interviews with CBS person: "He doesn't want to do it sitting down with the camera pointing at him and he doesn't want to do it walking either." CBS person tries to look understanding.)

He's the only artist I've ever met who genuinely didn't seem to care what impression I took away. Mick Jagger wants to be feared, Bruce Springsteen wants to be loved and Sting badly wants to be admired.

Bob Dylan, ladies and gentlemen, doesn't give a shit.

EACH NIGHT AROUND SIX he is delivered into Madison Square Garden by camper van. The vehicle pulls up a few yards from his dressing room and out he swings looking like... well, rather like a middle-aged Bob Dylan imitator; mirror shades, black leather jacket with white buckskin fringes, black leather trousers, black fingerless gloves and black motorcycle boots. The expression on his face – what you can see of his face – defies you to recognise him. Consequently all activity in the area freezes as he goes by.

This is the really poisonous thing about celebrity. When you're as famous as this, every room is occupied by people discussing your imminent arrival or your recent departure. Your reputation doesn't simply go before you; it clears the streets, checks the exits, halts the traffic, screams through a bullhorn. Everyone you're introduced to has read at least one book about you. It must be like being Adrian Mole.

Dylan is followed down the corridor by three dark-haired, solemn-beyond-their-years teenagers. They are Jesse, Samuel and Jacob, the three Dylan sons, Jesse, the oldest of them at 20, is being tugged along by an animal that appears to have been the product of a brief romance between a labrador and a bus. "My God," someone hisses as the creature wheezes past, "the hound is a horse!" A bone is produced. It was probably donated by a camel. This snack is taken into Dylan's dressing room.

What's the dog called? I enquire, as the animal falls upon the bone. (It evidently hasn't eaten for quarter of an hour.)

"I'm sorry?" says Dylan.
"I said 'what's the dog's name?'"
"Could you repeat that," cupping a hand to his ear.
"I just wondered whether the dog had a name..."
"Oh, the dog. No. (Pause as we both study the banqueting hound.) **No, actually he's called 'Late For Dinner'."**
"Sorry?"
"No, that dog has a name that is known only to me."
Oh. So far so good.

COME INTO THIS DRESSING ROOM.
(Don't mind the middle-aged man fidgeting with the scratched acoustic guitar in the corner – he's just the spokesman for a generation).

You know, if I was Bob Dylan I'd ask to be moved. This is neither a big nor a luxurious room. On a table in a corner there are ranks of half-bottles of Jim Beam Whisky, one bottle of Stolichnaya vodka and various mixers. The low table in the middle bears a well-wishers flowers and a book of Bible stories. The furniture is chipped and battered. A portable clothes rack is being stocked by a tall, red-haired girl called Susie.

Susie commutes between Dylan and the wider world outside the dressing room. She fetches fresh motorcycle boots from the giant flight case in the corridor, puts the booze on ice, informs him that *Time* magazine have been waiting down the corridor for a couple of hours, even tells him what time it is.

"Is Bobby Womack out there?" he enquires suddenly.

She looks. Yes he is. (Course he is.)

"Oh. Listen... er... oh, forget it. I'm getting ahead of myself... er..."

He puts the guitar down, jumps up, disappears into the next door bathroom and expectorates noisily.

OUT IN THE CORRIDOR two men are waiting. They are Richard Marquand and Joe Esterhaz, respectively Director and writer of *Hearts Of Fire*, the film Dylan starts work on as soon as his tour finishes. Marquand, who made *Jagged Edge*, is one of America's hottest directors. The film which purports to be "about stardom and the relationship between Europe and America," also stars Rupert Everett and Fiona Flanagan, an MTV-bred ingenue who has already made two albums for Atlantic. It's Dylan's first acting role since Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*. Unless you count *Renaldo And Clara*. He doesn't.

"I don't know, man. Was that a film?"

We had *Dont Look Back* on British TV a couple of months ago.

Another grey smile: **"I don't know, man. Half the stuff I do is someone else's idea."**

(This is a stock Dylan posture. During our conversation he assures me that the collaboration with Petty, the release of *Biograph*, the composition of *Knocked Out Loaded*, his casting in *Hearts Of Fire* and numerous other ventures were all "someone else's idea".)

"Somebody called me from the William Morris Agency. I just read it and it seemed like I knew that character, whoever it was. It's a guy who plays oldie shows. I could relate to that. I've done all those things, really."

The challenge of acting doesn't excite him so much as the prospect of getting to play music: **"Marquand says that maybe one of the bands could be Woody and Steve Jordan and somebody that Woody knows. That'd be great."**

Woody, who has joined Dylan on stage for the last half-dozen numbers throughout the New York engagement, is one of his firmest friends. Although one is known as one of the deeper

thinkers of his generation while the other is regarded as a lairy connoisseur of the pleasures of the flesh, they appear to pal down famously, lurching around the dressing room in an unsteady embrace after the show as Ron listens back to his guitar work on the *Knocked Out Loaded* track *Driftin'*. Woody knows how to make Dylan laugh in a very elementary way.

The Stones' guitarist is only marginally less puzzled about their friendship than anyone else: "I think we probably get on quite well because I'm quite happy if people don't particularly want to talk. I'll just carry on doing what I'm doing until he's ready."

IT'S RARE that a year goes by without another thick volume appearing in the tonier kind of bookshop, dedicated to documenting the life and anatomising the work of this obdurate individual. Within the last twelve months we've had Wilfred Mellers' tortuous musicological analysis, *A Darker Shade Of Pale*, Jonathan Cott's seriously glossy picture book, *Dylan*, and already the presses are rolling out Robert Shelton's exhaustive memoir, *No Direction Home*. Bob Dylan gets his fan mail between hard covers.

All these books are alike in their failure to throw any light on his more oblique songs and their frenzied attempt to read major significance into his throwaways. Groaning with footnotes and thick references to arcane Middle-Eastern works of philosophy they go in for a dismaying amount of "what Dylan is trying to say here is..." analysis. The day will doubtless arrive when we will read the words "what Muddy is trying to say here is that he has at last got his mojo working but can't as yet get it to work on the object of his desires."

The hero of all this literature claims not to be bothered by this scribbling industry: **"I just don't pay any attention to it. Life's too short, man."**

You must read the odd one.

"I try not to but every now and then I come across one of them at somebody's apartment or something. I was over at someone's place and there was a book there called *Positively Main Street*. I started reading it and it just made me crazed, you know, reading this stuff. On some level I was having a hard time separating me from the person I was reading about, you know what I mean?"

"I was feeling pretty good when I got there and then I read part of it and I just felt like another person; it was like Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde."

What he would make of the *Telegraph* I can only guess. Here is a magazine devoted exclusively to documenting the life of Robert Allen Zimmerman, a singer from Hibbing, Minnesota.

This is no cut-and-paste fanzine bashed off on the photocopier while the Inspector of Taxes is at lunch; this is a perfect-bound, color-covered, ultra devotional periodical published from Bury, Lancashire. If magazines are best run by obsessives, the *Telegraph* is the best. No minutae is too minute for the *Telegraph*. Here you can find correspondence dealing with whether Al Kooper or Mike Bloomfield wore the spotted shirt at the infamous Newport concert and the exact circumstances of Dylan's meeting with his former wife. Was it, as *Tangled Up In Blue* infers, in a "topless joint" or could that just have meant the Playboy Club? After all she was married at the time to Victor Lownes... The only other place you can find fact fetishism taken to this pitch is among the pages of *The Cricketer*.

For the benefit of those who are either impervious to the appeal of Bob Dylan or too young to have known him as anything but the last act at Live Aid, it's useful to stand back and appreciate

the strength of his hold on a lot of people. Bootleg recordings are the true measure of the constancy of an artist's following. Nobody ever sold Gerry and the Pacemakers bootlegs or Donovan bootlegs or Boomtown Rats bootlegs. Neither do they market illicit recordings of Michael Jackson so it's not a simple question of fame.

People buy bootlegs of artists they feel such kinship with that it's inconceivable that they could ever be disappointed with what they hear. If you were to produce a recording of Bob Dylan boiling a kettle I could find you a few buyers tomorrow. They would file it alongside the rest of their collection: the 1961 recordings of Dylan singing *Pastures Of Plenty* to Woody Guthrie's friend's daughter in a New Jersey motel room; the Washington Civil Rights rally of 1963; his interview with Studs Terkel in Chicago; his Woodstock duets with George Harrison from 1970; his 1975 answerphone message; his ill-tempered telephone exchanges with A. J. Weberman (*"Hey man, why don't you just get off my back?"*); the video of his Isle Of Wight press conference from 1969; a matchless hovering blues called *Blind Willie McTell* that has become one of his most celebrated songs; the soundchecks from every date of his last world tour; the out-takes, false starts, rough drafts and abandoned masterpieces of half a lifetime.

No wonder he's careful about fans.

"Boy, coming out of the hotel tonight, it was a real zoo. I don't know who's a fan. It's a short word for fanaticism. I've always been uncomfortable in a crush of people who were fans of mine. I've always felt more comfortable with people who didn't know me. I can go really most places and nobody will recognise me except people who know who I am. I could just disappear into a crowd unless someone knows who I am and then they'll point me out to other people and then you suddenly find yourself the center of all this attention."

LIKE SO MANY ROCK STARS Dylan is a shy man who's also an incorrigible show-off. On stage in New York he eschewed all frontal lighting in the sure knowledge that his silhouetted profile alone would be quite sufficient to divert attention from Tom Petty. He only spoke a couple of times, to enquire **"anyone out there running for office? No? Good,"** before *Ballad Of A Thin Man* and introduce *In The Garden* with the words **"this is for all the people in gaol, not for doing evil things but for doing good things."**

How he chooses twenty or so songs from such a repertoire is a mystery; some nights on this tour he's launched into forgotten favorites with the minimum of warning. But the sad truth is that the only artists who can win on venues like Madison are the people who can pump up their music way beyond life-size. Springsteen can handle it. Dylan can't, shouldn't even be trying. It's an undignified way to carry on. The audience who divided equally between old fans along for the nostalgic ride and tanked-up teenagers waiting for that drug song about everybody getting stoned, didn't seem to be listening much. Petty's journeyman radio rock covered their needs adequately.

The star hits stride only intermittently; *Hard Rain* hammered out with a father's righteous indignation; *In The Garden* sufficiently deeply felt to slice its way through the band's vague shuffle. *Positively Fourth Street* on the other hand had only curiosity value. I confessed to not understanding why he still bothered with a song so specifically addressed to a person who's been out of his life for twenty years.

"Yes, but so are folk songs. Some of those are a hundred years old, but so what?"

So *Positively Fourth Street* can bear the same degree of repetition as *Wild Mountain Thyme*?

"No... I don't know. On some level maybe. But *Wild Mountain Thyme* now..." He smiles and begins to pick a tune on the guitar.

(It isn't *Wild Mountain Thyme*. It isn't anything much.)

"Do you know the McPeake Family?"

Afraid not.

"They're a group from Ireland."

So is that what he likes listening to?

"I like the Egyptian singer Om-Kalsoum. She passed away about fifteen years ago. I bought a record of hers when I was in Jerusalem in 1972. This guy was selling them on the street corner and they were obviously bootleg records." He laughs and then decides maybe we'd better not say they were bootlegs. (I presume he means pirates, anyway.) **"I like Edith Piaf a lot."**

In an attempt to gradually entice him into the present decade, I enquire about people like Boy George.

"I thought that was a nice record, that *Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?* That and the Chameleon song. I liked him when he wore that white coat and that black hat and the braids. I don't know why he ever changed."

He's been on a heroin charge in Britain.

"He has? Poor Boy George."

I FIRST HEARD BOB DYLAN'S MUSIC in a school room. Some powerful sophisticated 6th former descended from on high to play us young pups his precious copies of the first four Dylan albums. We'd seen the name in a songwriting credit, read about "protest music" in *Disc* but we'd no idea what to expect really. I thought you pronounced him Die-lunn.

I can clearly remember this callow 17-year-old playing *Spanish Harlem Incident* on the school's mahogany-panelled Ferguson gramophone and then telling us that with this album, *Another Side Of Bob Dylan*, the artist had moved on and matured, leaving protest music behind him for good. I felt vaguely cheated. So it had all scarpered already, before I'd even got my denim cap.

Nobody in popular music has been measured in such a relentlessly chronological fashion as Dylan. Every review harks back to the last album. Ever since 1964 somebody somewhere has been wistfully referring to the "Dylan of old". Some said it was all over before he'd made his first record. And still people are enquiring where he's been and where he's going as if Bob Dylan has a list of tasks to discharge in his lifetime and we're worried that he might not get them all done.

"I don't know if I'll still be doing this in twenty years time. Twenty years ago I couldn't have imagined myself still doing it now. Actually I could if you don't think in terms of time. I try not to think in terms of time; years, minutes, hours and all that sort of thing. It's destructive for me to do that."

In actual fact, when people in the music business talk about time, what they're actually discussing is fashion. Pop stars aspire, above all things, to stay contemporary. It's this very prospect that Bob Dylan views with the most horror. Talking to him about the vicissitudes of the British music scene is like trying to explain the tax system of a distant planet. He doesn't understand and he doesn't care to either.

Bob Dylan reckons the proudest achievement of his entire career was to introduce the name of Woody Guthrie to a wider audience. He says, what the hell, if he were to remake *Highway 61* tomorrow nobody would recognise it. And what if they did? What would they say then? What's a simple folk singer to do?

If there does need to be an argument for Bob Dylan it was provided last year by *Biograph*, an impeccably compiled and annotated five record box set that put *All Along The Watchtower* next to *Solid Rock*, *Every Grain Of Sand* next to *Visions Of Johanna*, and *Caribbean Wind* next to *Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window?* It proved that there was a singer who'd always lived by his own lights, more concerned with the mystery of a moment than the need to make a statement; funnier, acuter, more spiritual and more musically sophisticated than most of us had ever guessed. And there wasn't a single song among the 52 recordings that sounded even remotely dated. Needless to say Dylan denies having any part of it: **"I didn't put it together and I haven't been very excited about it."**

Instead he's spent the last year or so recording in studios all over the world with a bewildering variety of musicians and then shelving most of the results, boxing to keep fit and then smoking two packs of Kools a day to achieve the opposite effect, visiting Moscow at the invitation of the Soviet Writers' Union and then professing to be perplexed with his experience: **"To tell you the truth I didn't understand too much of it because I didn't understand the languages too well. The peculiar thing was there wasn't anybody at this particular poetry reading that I figured bad even heard of me a little bit."**

There was, however, an invitation to return with his guitar: **"They said, don't do what Elton John did. He played 3,000 seat hails and the only people who got in to see him were bureaucratic people and there are a lot of bureaucrats there. It's really spooky."**

What about the current squabbles between America and Russia?

"I don't know why America has got this problem with Russia because didn't the Russians finance the American Revolution? I'm sure they did. Who else would have? They finance revolutions all over the world, right? They did it then too. I think we ought to be grateful to them rather than trying to fucking blow them off the planet. But that's just my opinion and I'm not running for nothing."

Surely somebody ought to run for office?

"I don't know if there needs to be any office."

What about your fellow entertainer, the one in the White House?

"I don't know. I've seen a lot of Presidents come and go. I like the King and Queen idea. I like the idea of somebody..."

"... somebody you can trust?"

"Yes," he laughs. **"Somebody you can look up to."**

A queue is building up in the corridor. There are familiar raddled Manhattan faces like Andy Warhol and Ric Ocasek alongside the newer Hollywood generation represented by Timothy Hutton, Debra Winger and Maria McKee. Judy Collins, who hit Greenwich Village at the same time as Dylan, is there, looking faintly matronly and talking about Farm Aid II and "the movement" as if it were still 1962. She is charming, well-mannered and completely lacking in the mystique that helped her old friend "Bobby" make it to where the air is rare. Everybody – Tom Petty, Ronnie Wood, even Dylan's girlfriend Carole Childs – waits to be admitted to the presence. They all have one thing in common – they're all scared of him.

BACK AT THE SPEAKEASY the party is in full swing. Some misguided soul has embarked on an ill-advised version of *When The Ship Comes In* and the crowd up by the bar are making their own entertainment.

"Goddamn, you'll never guess who's in the bathroom!"

"The legendary Bob Dylan?"

"How'd you know?"

"Excuse me. I'd like three Heinekens and a gin and tonic for the Frewheelin' Bob Dylan..."

"Hey mister. Did anybody ever tell you you didn't look a bit like the enigmatic Bob Dylan?"

"Could you call a cab for the spokesman of a generation?"

August 1986
Sam Shepard Interview, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 731-742

Published in *Esquire*, July 1987 and commonly known as the "*Esquire Playlet*". Although in play form, there is no doubt that this interview between Sam Shepard (SS) and Bob Dylan took place and is reported as it actually happened. The interview / play is set in August 1986 shortly after the Paso Robles concert.

TRUE DYLAN
A ONE-ACT PLAY, AS IT REALLY HAPPENED ONE AFTERNOON IN CALIFORNIA

SCENE: IN THE DARK, a Jimmy Yancey piano solo is heard very softly, floating in the background. Soft, blue, foggy light creeps in, extreme upstage, revealing a large, weathered brick patio bordered by shaggy grass upstage and opening out to a distant view of the Pacific Ocean. The distant rhythmic splashing of waves is heard underneath the piano music and continues throughout the play, always in the background. The only set piece onstage is a round redwood table with a big yellow umbrella stuck in the middle of it and two redwood benches set across from each other at the table. The table and benches are set down left (from the actors' point of view).

As the light keeps rising, a short, skinny guy named Bob is seen center stage dressed in nothing but a pair of light-green boxer shorts. His arms are clasped across his chest with each hand gripping the opposite shoulder, as though warding off the cold. He turns in a slow circle to his right and then repeats the circle to the left, looking out to the ocean as his gaze passes it. He stops, facing audience, covers his face with both hands, then rubs his eyes and draws his hands slowly down his cheeks to his chin. His mouth drops open and his head slowly drops back on his shoulders to stare at the sky. He holds that position. Piano music stops abruptly. Sam, a tall, skinny guy dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, carrying a tape recorder, several notebooks, and a six pack of beer, enters from right. He stops. Bob drops his hands and stares at Sam.
Pause.
Sound of distant waves continues.

SS: Ready?
BD: Yeah. I just gotta make a couple phone calls first.

[Bob moves toward stage right, then stops]

BD: Oh, you know where I just was?
SS: Where?
BD: Paso Robles. You know, on that highway where James Dean got killed?
SS: Oh yeah?
BD: I was there at the spot. On the spot. A windy kinda place.
SS: They've got a statue or monument to him in that town, don't they?
BD: Yeah, but I was on the curve where he had the accident. Outsida town. And this place is incredible. I mean the place where he died is as powerful as the place he lived.
SS: Nebraska?
BD: Where'd he live?
SS: He came from the farm, didn't he? Somewhere.

BD: Yeah, Iowa or Indiana. I forget. But this place up there has this kind of aura about it. It's on this kind of broad expanse of land. It's like that place made James Dean who he is. If he hadn't't've died there he wouldn't't've been James Dean.
SS: Hm.

[Bob moves as though to exit stage right again, but stops again.]

BD: You know what Elvis said? He said that if James Dean had sang he'd've been Ricky Nelson.
SS: Is that right?
BD: Yeah. [pause] **You need anything?**
SS: Nope.
BD: You brought some beer?
SS: Yeah.
BD: I just gotta make a couple phone calls.
SS: Good.

[Bob exits stage right as Sam moves down left toward table. Just as Bob exits, the sound of screeching tires and a loud car crash comes from off right. Sam pays no attention, but goes about setting tape recorder, beer, and notebooks on table. Bob re-enters from right but with no reaction to car-crash sounds.]

BD: Who was playin' that music before?
SS: What music?
BD: That piano music.
SS: I dunno.
BD: Hm.
SS: "If James Dean sang he'd've been Ricky Nelson?" Elvis said that?
BD: Yeah. Poor ol' Ricky. I wish he was here with us today. I wonder if anyone ever told him, when he was alive, how great he was. I mean like the rock n' roll critics.
SS: You got me.
BD: You know, Emilio Fernandez used to shoot the critics that didn't like his movies. At parties.

[Bob exits stage right. Sam sits on bench facing stage right, pulls out a cassette tape and sticks it in recorder, punches a button, and the same Jimmy Yancey tune is heard coming from the machine itself. Only a snatch is heard before Bob's voice comes from offstage right, speaking on the phone. As soon as Bob's voice is heard, Sam shuts the recorder off and starts leafing through his notebook, scribbling in them now and then.]

BD: [off right] **Maria? Listen, what's that thing gonna be like tonight?** [pause] **Yeah. There gonna be a lotta people there?** [pause] **Well, that's what I'm tryin' to figure out.** [pause] **Yeah. I don't know. How many people you think there'll be?** [pause] **Okay, well look, I got somebody here so.** [Pause] **Yeah, I know. Yeah, well, I seen their act before. Yeah, I seen it. I seen it in St. Louis. Yeah.** [Pause] **I dunno – '59 or '60, somethin' like that.** [laughs, pause] **I was around. I been around a long time. I can't count anymore. Okay, look, I'll talk to you later and see what's goin' on.** [pause] **Okay. Bye.**

[Bob hangs up offstage. Sam looks in that direction, then returns to his notebook, cracks open a can of beer, and drinks.]

BD: [off right] **Sam, what's this thing supposed to be about anyway?**
SS: I dunno.

BD: [off] **Are we supposed to have a theme?**
SS: I got a buncha questions here.
BD: [off] **You brought questions?**
SS: Yeah.
BD: **How many questions?**
SS: Couple.
BD: **What if I don't have the answers?**
SS: Make it up.
BD: **Okay, so ask me a question.**
SS: [quickly putting a cassette in recorder] Okay, wait a second. I gotta see if this thing is working.
BD: **You got a tape?**
SS: [punching RECORD button] Yeah. Okay. All right. It's rolling.
BD: **Ask me somethin'.**
SS: Right [referring to notebooks] Let's see – okay -let's see now – okay – here we go – Do you have any ideas about angels? Do you ever think about angels?
BD: **That's the first question?**
SS: You want me to start with something else?
BD: [still off] **No, that's okay. Angels. Yeah, now, angels now – what is it?** [Pause] **Oh – the pope says this about angels – he says they exist.**
SS: Yeah? The pope?
BD: **Yeah. And they're spiritual beings. That's what he says.**
SS: Do you believe it?
BD: **Yeah.**
SS: Have you had any direct experience with angels?
BD: **Yeah. Yeah, I have. I just gotta make one more phone call, all right?**
SS: Yeah. [shuts tape off]
BD: **You need anything?**
SS: Naw, I'm fine.

[Sam drinks more beer, scribbles more notes. Pause. Bob's voice is heard again offstage right on phone. Sound of waves continues]

BD: [off right] **Maria? Hi, it's me again** [pause, laughs] **Yeah, I just like the sound of your voice. Listen, what's the area code for Tulsa, do you know?** [pause] **Tulsa, yeah.** [pause] **All right. Good.** [pause] **Yeah, that's okay. I don't need it right away.** [pause] **Oh, ya did?** [pause] **Yeah?** [pause] **So, it's just a few people then? What's a few?** [pause] **That's more than a few.** [laughs] **Yeah, but, that's not what you'd call a few.** [pause] **Aw, I dunno. Look, I'll just have to think about it – see how the day goes – then I'll get back to you.** [pause] **Yeah, okay. Bye** [hangs up].
SS: [after pause] You want me to come back? I could go out and come back if you want. Have some lunch.
BD: [off] **Naw, you're here. Stay. I'm just gettin' some clothes on. I'll be right there. Ask me another question.**
SS: Oh, okay – [punching recorder on] uh – let's see-[referring to notebook] okay – What was the first music you can remember listening to? Way back.
BD: [off] **First music. First music?**
SS: Yeah.
BD: [off] **Live, ya mean? Live?**
SS: Yeah. Live.
BD: [off] **First music ever?**
SS: Yeah.

[pause]

BD: [off] **Polka music**
SS: Really?

[Bob enters from right wearing a sleeveless T-shirt, black jeans, and motorcycle boots with brass buckles. He carries a beat-up old acoustic guitar strung around his neck with an old piece of rope. He continually fingers the neck of the guitar and keeps picking out little repetitive melody lines, short blues progressions, gospel chords – whatever comes into his mind. He keeps this up through all the dialogue, even when he's talking, rarely resting into complete silence.]

BD: [onstage now] **Yeah, polka.**
SS: [drinking beer] Where? Up in Hibbing?
BD: Yeah, Hibbing.
SS: Hibbing's near Duluth, right?
BD: Right.
SS: I love Duluth.
BD: Great town.
SS: That lake.
BD: Superior?
SS: Yeah. Tough town, too.
BD: [always moving, picking guitar] **Especially when it freezes over. Indians come out. Fur trappers.**
SS: Beaver.
BD: Yeah, beaver too. Loons.
SS: So you heard this polka music in what – dance halls or something?
BD: Yeah – no – taverns. Beer joints. They played it in all the taverns. You just walk down the street and hear that all the time. People'd come flyin' out into the street doin' the polka. Accordions would come flyin' out.
SS: Were they fighting or dancing'?
BD: Both, I guess. Mostly just having a good time. People from the old country.
SS: Polish?
BD: Some. I guess.
SS: Were they singing in Polish?
BD: They were singin' in somethin'. Swedish maybe. Some language. But you know how you don't need to know the language when it's music. You understand the music no matter what language it's in. Like when I went down and heard that Tex-Mex border music – that sounded like the same music to me even though the language was different. It all sounds the same to me.
SS: Three-quartertime.
BD: Yeah-waltz. I love to waltz.
SS: How old were you then?
BD: Aw, I dunno. Nine-ten.
SS: Did you feel like you were cut off back then?
BD: How d'ya mean?
SS: I mean being up in the Far North like that. In the boondocks.
BD: Nah, 'cause I didn't know anything else was go in' on. Why, did you?
SS: Yeah. I still do. [laughs]
BD: [sings a snatch and plays] **Down in the boondocks / Down in the boondocks / Lord have mercy on a boy / From down In the boondocks.**
SS: So you didn't have any big burning desire to get to New York or anything?
BD: Naw. The only reason I wanted to go to New York is 'cause James Dean had been there.

SS: So you really liked James Dean?
BD: Oh, yeah. Always did.
SS: How come?
BD: Same reason you like anybody. I guess. You see somethin' of yourself in them.
SS: Did you dream about music back then?
BD: I had lotsa dreams. Used to dream about things like Ava Gardner and Wild Bill Hickock. They were playin' cards, chasin' each other, and gettin' around. Sometimes I'd even be there in the dreams myself. Radio station dreams. You know how, when you're a kid, you stay up late in bed, listening to the radio, and you sort of dream off the radio into sleep. That's how you used to fall to sleep. That's when disc jockeys played whatever they felt like.
SS: I used to fall asleep listening to baseball.
BD: Yeah. Same thing. Just sorta dream off into the radio. Like you were inside the radio kinda.
SS: Yeah – I could see the diamond with the lights lit up and the green lawn of the outfield and the pitcher's eyes looking for the catcher's signals.
BD: But I don't know if you ever dream about music. How do you dream about music?
SS: Well, I mean, for instance, a song like *Pledging My Love*.
BD: Forever my darling.
SS: Yeah.
BD: What about it?
SS: Well, I used to dream myself into that kind of a song.
BD: Really? I didn't think you were that romantic.
SS: Oh yeah, I'm very romantic.
BD: So, you mean you kinda put yourself into the song when you were listening to it?
SS: Yeah. Put myself in the place of the singer.
BD: I see what you mean, [pause still moving and picking] **Yeah, I guess I used to dream about music then. You have all different kinda dreams with music, though. I mean, sometimes I'd hear a guy sing a tune and I'd imagine the guy himself. What's the guy himself like? You know? Like Hank Williams or Buddy Holly or John Lee Hooker You'd hear a line like *black snake moan* or *Mississippi Flood* – you could see yourself waist-high in muddy water.**
SS: Or maybe an image would come up from a line – like, I remember always seeing this image of my algebra teacher's scalp when I heard that Chuck Berry line, *The teacher is teachin' the golden rule*, from *School Day*.
BD: His scalp?
SS: Yeah, he had one of those Marine-style crew cuts where the scalp shows through on top. I still see his scalp when I hear that line.
BD: You don't hear that line much these days.
SS: Nope, [pause] So, you'd mainly imagine the singer when you heard the song?
BD: Yeah. A faceless singer. I'd fill in the face.
SS: Is that the reason you went to see Woody Guthrie when he was sick? You'd heard his music?
BD: Yeah. I heard his songs.
SS: Is there anybody in your life you wished you'd met and didn't?
BD: [quick, still playing] **Yeah, Bob Marley.**
SS: Really.
BD: Yeah. We were playin' in Waco, Texas, one time. And I missed him.
SS: That was pretty close to miss each other.
BD: Yeah. I wish I'd met him.

[pause]

SS: So you went to see Guthrie in the hospital.
BD: Uh-huh.
SS: And you were there at his death bed?
BD: Close.
SS: Were you with him up to where he passed?

[Long pause. Bob stops playing and thinks hard.]

BD: No.

[Bob immediately jumps back into playing and moving.]

SS: You spent a lotta time with him in the hospital?
BD: Yeah.
SS: Was he coherent?
BD: Yeah – no – he was coherent but he had no control over his reflexes. So he'd be...

[pause]

SS: What'd you talk about?
BD: Not too much. I never really did speak too much to him. He would call out the name of a song. A song he wrote that he wanted to hear, and I knew all his songs.
SS: So you played 'em to him?
BD: Yeah.
SS: Did you ask him anything?
BD: No, I mean there was nothin' to ask him. What're you gonna ask him? He wasn't the kinda guy you asked questions to.

[pause]

SS: So you just kinda sat with him for days.
BD: Yeah – I'd go out there. You had to leave at 5:00. It was in Greystone – Greypark or Greystone – it's in New Jersey. Out somewhere there. Bus went there. Greyhound bus. From the Forty-second Street terminal. You'd go there and you'd get off and you walked up the hill to the gates. Actually it was a pretty foreboding place.
SS: How old were you?

[Bob stops still. Stops picking. Thinks.]

BD: How old was I? [pause] **I don't know. Nineteen, I guess.**
SS: Nineteen. And what kinda stuff were you listening to back then?
BD: Oh, Bill Monroe, New Lost City Ramblers, Big Mama Thornton. People like that. Peggy Seeger. Jean Ritchie.
SS: Hank Snow?
BD: I'd always listened to Hank Snow.
SS: At that time were you fishin' around for a form?
BD: Well, you can't catch fish ' les you trow de line, mon.
SS: This is true.
BD: Naw, I've always been real content with the old forms. I know my place by now.
SS: So you feel like you know who you are?
BD: Well, you always know who you are. I just don't know who I'm gonna become.

[Pause. Bob keeps movin' and picking.]

BD: Did we ever see each other back then?
SS: When?
BD: When we were nineteen.
SS: I saw you one time on the corner of Sixth Avenue and Houston Street.
BD: What year?
SS: Musta been '66, '67. Somethin' like that. You were wearin' a navy-blue pea jacket and tennis shoes.
BD: Yeah, that musta been me. Naw, this was earlier than that. I was listenin' to all them records on Stinson label and Folkways.
SS: Stinson?
BD: Yeah. Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee. Almanac Singers.
SS: Almanac Singers?
BD: Yeah.
SS: What about gospel?
BD: I always listened to gospel music. Dixie Hummingbirds, Highway QC's, Five Blind Boys, and, of course, the Staple Singers.
SS: What about Skip James or Joseph Spence?
BD: Yeah. Bahama mama. [pause] **Skip James. Once there was a Skip James. Elmore James.**
SS: Rather be buried in some old Cypress grove.
BD: So my evil spirit can grab that greyhound bus and ride.
SS: I'd rather sleep in some old hollow log than have a bad woman you can't control.
BD: Now, what was it he died of?
SS: Skip James?
BD: Yeah.
SS: Cancer of the balls.
BD: What?!
SS: Yeah. Cancer of the balls. He refused to go to any white doctors 'cause he was afraid they'd cut his nuts off.
BD: Don't blame him one bit.

[Phone rings off right. Bob exits off right, leaving Sam alone. Sam turns off tape then rewinds it a short ways and plays it back. Again, the Jimmy Yancey piano music comes from recorder. No voices As Bob's voice is heard off right on phone. Sam keeps rewinding tape, playing it back in short snatches, trying to find their voices, but all that comes out is the piano music]

BD: [off right] **Four oh five? Four oh five. You're sure?** [pause] **I dunno. Four oh five sounds like Oklahoma City. I can't remember.** [pause] **All right.** [pause] **Yeah Four oh five.** [pause] **Naw, I think I'm gonna pass.** [pause] **I dunno. Sounds like too many record producers.** [pause] **Yeah. I'll just hang around here probably.** [pause] **Okay. All right.** [pause] **Yeah.**

[Bob enters again, with guitar, carrying a glass of whiskey on ice. He crosses to table, sets glass down after taking a sip, then starts picking the guitar again. Sam is still trying to find their voices on the tape but gets only the piano music.]

SS: [fooling with tape] This is incredible.
BD: What.
SS: There's nothin' on here but piano music.
BD: [laughs, keeps picking] **You mean our voices aren't on there?**
SS: Listen.

[He lets tape play. Jimmy Yancey rolls out]

BD: [listens] **That's the same music I was askin' you about.**
SS: When?
BD: Before. When you first came. That's the music.
SS: Well, our voices ain't on here.
BD: Don't matter.
SS: Well, I can't remember all this stuff. How am I gonna remember all this stuff?
BD: Make it up.
SS: Well, there's certain things you can't make up.
BD: Like what?
SS: Certain turns of phrase.
BD: Try it again. It's gotta be on there. You had it on RECORD, right?
SS: Yeah.
BD: So it must be on there somewhere. You just gotta fool around with it.

[Sam rewinds, then plays tape. Their voices are heard this time, coming out of recorder].

BD: [from tape] **Golden Rocket.**
SS: [from tape] At that time were you fishin' around for a form?
BD: [from tape] **Well you can't catch fish 'les you trow de line, mon.**

[Sam shuts tape off]

BD: There. See. It was just hidin' out. [laughs]
SS: This is amazing. Where'd that music come from?
BD: Musta been on there already. Is it an old tape?
SS: No, I just bought it this morning. [Bob takes a sip of whiskey, sets glass down.]
BD: Angels.

[Sam punches RECORD button. They continue. Bob keeps moving and playing guitar.]

SS: Weird.
BD: Is it on now?
SS: Yeah. I guess.
BD: Okay. Fire away.
SS: Okay. Let's see. [referring to notebook] Do you think it's possible to have a pact with someone?
BD: A pact? Yeah. I know that's possible. I mean you should have a pact with someone. That presents a small problem for me, though – for instance, how many people can you have a pact with? And how many at the same time?
SS: Not too many. How about women?
BD: Nah, I don't know anything about women.
SS: How 'bout waitresses?
BD: Well, it seems to me that waitresses are gettin' younger and younger these days. Some of 'em look like babies.
SS: So, you don't have much hope for women?
BD: On the contrary. Women are the only hope. I think they're a lot more stable than men. Only trouble with women is they let things go on too long.
SS: What things?
BD: The whole Western sense of reality. Sometimes women have a tendency to be too lenient. Like a kid can go down and bust some old man in the head, rob a buncha old

ladies, burglarize his brother's joint, and blow up a city block, and his momma will still come down and cry over him.

SS: Yeah, but that's just nature, isn't it? The nature of being a mother.

BD: Yeah, I guess so. Nature.

SS: Have you ever felt like a couple?

BD: A couple? You mean two? Yeah. All the time. Sometimes I feel like ten couples.

SS: I mean like you're a past of another person. Like you belong. That other person carries something of you around with them and visee-versee.

BD: Visee-versee?

SS: Yeah.

BD: Yeah. Sure. A couple. Sure. I've felt like that. Absolutely. Look – listen to this: [sings and plays] ***You must learn to leave the table when love is no longer being served/Just show them all that you are able/Just get up and leave without saying a word***

SS: Who wrote that?

BD: You got me. Roy Orbison or somebody. I dunno.

SS: Roy Orbison?

BD: Naw. I dunno. Good lyric.

SS: Yeah. [writing a note] You must learn to leave the table...

BD: I mean you gravitate toward people who've got somethin' to give you and maybe you've got somethin' that they need.

SS: Yeah, right.

BD: And then maybe one day you wake up and see that they're not givin' it to you anymore. Maybe that's the way it is.

SS: But maybe you're not, either.

BD: Yeah. Maybe you haven't been givin' it to 'em for years. Maybe the rhythm's off.

SS: You know, I've heard this theory that women are rhythmically different from men. By nature.

BD: Oh yeah? I'll drink to that.

SS: Yeah. That the female rhythm is a side to side, horizontal movement and the male rhythm is vertical – up and down.

BD: You mean sorta like a flying horse?

SS: Yeah. Sorta.

BD: But then the two come together, don't they?

SS: Right.

BD: So they become one rhythm then.

SS: Yeah.

BD: So there's no such a thing as "sides" in the long run. It's all the same.

SS: It's just a theory.

BD: Yeah. Well, you can make a theory outta anything, I suppose.

SS: Do you feel those two different kinds of rhythms in you?

BD: Yeah, sure. We all do. There's that shaky, side-to-side thing and the jerky, up-and-down one. But they're a part of each other. One can 't do without the other. Like God and the Devil.

SS: Did you always feel those two parts?

BD: Yeah. Always. Like you feel the lie and the truth. At the same time, sometimes. Both, together. Like remember in *Giant*...

SS: The movie?

BD: Yeah. That last scene in *Giant*. You know that scene where Jett Rink stumbles all over himself across the table.

SS: Yeah.

BD: Well, I never did like that scene. Always felt like there was somethin' phony about it. Didn't quite ring true. Always bothered me. Like there was a lie hiding in there somewhere, but I couldn't quite put my finger on it.

SS: Yeah, I never did either. You mean where he's drunk and alone in the convention hall or whatever it was?

BD: Yeah. You know why that was? Why it felt phony?

SS: The makeup. All that gray in his hair?

BD: No, no. I wish it was the makeup. Turns out Nick Adams, an actor at that time, who was a friend of James Dean's, he overdubbed that speech because James Dean had died by that time.

SS: Is that right?

BD: Yeah. And that makes perfect sense because that don't ring true. The end of that movie. But that's what I mean – the lie and the truth, like that.

[pause]

SS: Well, what happened to his voice?

BD: Whaddya mean?

SS: I mean what happened to James Dean's original voice on the track? They must've had his voice track if they had the film on him.

BD: I dunno. Maybe it was messed up or something.

SS: Maybe it disappeared.

BD: Maybe. Just vanished. I dunno.

[Again, the sound of screeching brakes and car crash, off right. Neither of the characters pays any attention. Long pause as Bob moves and picks guitar. Sam makes notes.]

BD: Sometimes I wonder why James Dean was great. Because – was he great or was everybody around him great?

SS: No, he was great.

BD: You think so?

SS: Yeah. I mean, remember the scene in *Rebel Without A Cause* with Sal Mineo on the steps of the courthouse? Where he gets shot.

BD: Plato.

SS: Yeah, and he's holding Plato in his arms, and in the other hand he's got the bullets.

BD: Yeah.

SS: What was it he says? "They're not real bullets" or – no – what was it?

BD: "I've got the bullets!"

SS: Right. [suddenly screaming with his arm outstretched in imitation of James Dean] "I've got the bullets!" [back to normal voice] I mean, that's spectacular acting. Where do you see that kind of acting these days?

BD: Nowhere. He didn't come up overnight either. I mean he really studied whatever it was he was about.

SS: I guess.

BD: Well, why do you suppose – I mean what was it that he did that was so different? For instance, in that scene with the bullets. What made that scene so incredible?

SS: It was this pure kind of expression.

BD: Of what?

SS: Of an emotion. But it went beyond the emotion into another territory. Like most actors in that scene would express nothing but self-pity, but he put across a true remorse.

BD: Remorse?

SS: Yeah. For mankind. A pity for us all. This wasted life. This dumb death of an innocent kid. The death of the innocent.

BD: So he actually did have a cause then?

SS: I don't know.

BD: "*Rebel with a Cause*." See, that's the devil's work.

SS: What?

BD: Words have lost their meaning. Like rebel. Like cause. Like love. They mean a million different things.

SS: Like Hank Williams?

BD: Naw, you can never change the meaning of Hank Williams. That's here to stay. Nobody'll ever change that.

SS: Did you used to listen to him a lot?

BD: Overload. Who can you listen to if you can't listen to Hank?

SS: Did he mean the same thing to you as James Dean?

BD: Yeah, but in different ways. They both told the truth.

SS: They both died in cars.

BD: Yeah.

SS: A Cadillac and a Porsche.

BD: He was on his way to Ohio, I think. Some gig in Ohio.

SS: I saw the car he died in. Cadillac coupe, convertible. I looked in the back seat of that car and this overwhelming sense of loneliness seized me by the throat. It was almost unbearable. I couldn't look very long. I had to turn away.

BD: Maybe you shouldn'ta looked at all.

SS: Maybe. [Pause] Are you superstitious?

BD: Naw.

SS: You had a crash, right? A motorcycle.

BD: Oh, yeah. Way back. Triumph 500.

SS: What happened?

BD: I couldn't handle it. I was dumbstruck.

SS: How do you mean ?

BD: I just wasn't ready for it. It was real early in the morning on top of a hill near Woodstock. I can't even remember exactly how it happened. I was blinded by the sun for a second. This big orange sun was comin' up. I was driving right straight into the sun, and I looked up into it even though I remember someone telling me a long time ago when I was a kid never to look straight at the sun 'cause you'll get blinded. I forget who told me that. My dad or an uncle or somebody. Somebody in the family, I always believed that must be true or else why would an adult tell you something like that. And I never did look directly at the sun when I was a kid, but this time, for some reason, I just happened to look up right smack into the sun with both eyes and, sure enough, I went blind for a second and I kind of panicked or something. I stomped down on the brake and the rear wheel locked up on me and I went flyin'.

SS: Were you out?

BD: Yeah. Out cold.

SS: Who found you?

BD: Sara. She was followin' me in a car. She picked me up. Spent a week in the hospital, then they moved me to this doctor's house in town. In his attic. Had a bed up there in the attic with a window lookin' out. Sara stayed there with me. I just remember how bad I wanted to see my kids. I started thinkin' about the short life of trouble. How short life is. I'd just lay there listenin ' to birds chirping. Kids playing in the neighbor's yard or rain falling by the window. I realized how much I'd missed. Then I'd hear the fire engine roar, and I could feel the steady thrust of death that had been constantly looking over its shoulder at me. [pause] **Then I'd just go back to sleep.**

[Phone rings off right. Bob turns and look in that direction but doesn't move toward it. He stops playing guitar. Phone keeps ringing. He just stares off right. Lights begin to fade very slowly. Bob stays still, staring off right. Sam stops recorder, then rewinds and punches PLAY button. The Jimmy Yancey music fills the room, joining the sound of waves. Lights

keep dimming to black. The phone keeps ringing. The waves keep crashing. Jimmy Yancey keeps playing in the dark.]

17 August 1986
National Film Theatre, Dylan-Marquand chat, London, England

Source: *Circulating tape*

Richard Marquand (RM) meets Bob Dylan (BD) in front of the National Film Theatre in London where both are about to have a press conference.

RM: Hey, Bob, how are you doing?
BD: Okay, all right.
RM: I've seen Jack there.
BD: Huh?
RM: I've seen Jack there.
BD: No… okay.

17 August 1986
Hearts Of Fire Press Conference, London, England

Source: *the Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 931-937.

Dylan, Fiona Flanagan (FF) and Rupert Everett (RE) face the press at the National Film Theatre in London on August 17 1986, for discussions on their upcoming film *Hearts Of Fire* produced by Richard Marquand (RM). Identifiable among the questioners are Philip Norman (PN) and John Bauldie (JB). This has been taken from the circulating tape.

RM: This film really is a film about stardom. It's a film about whether you can handle stardom when the hot light actually comes to shine on you. Can you, in fact, deal with your dream when it becomes reality? And it's also a love story. We set up an incredibly hot triangle of forces between the two men who are basically vying for various reasons in... for the favours of this young, rather talented, American girl called Molly McGuire when she comes to this country. Incidentally, it is, in fact, set in the world, the contemporary world of music so that, in fact, there is a lot of music within the film but it's all integral and organic to the story.

Bob, you've directed a film yourself, *Renaldo & Clara*, and you're not very well known for singing or speaking other people's words. Why did you decide to commit to this film?

BD: Well, it was just, you know, the right time, right place, right words.

The right words? OK!

Questions to Marquand, Fiona, Everett

PN: I'm Philip Norman from the *Sunday Times* and I'd like to know why one of the biggest poets and musicians of this century feels he has to play someone who's a retired star. Why isn't he a performing star, as he is, such a great star? Why is he bothering?

RM: That's a nice question.

BD: Well, it's just a movie...

PN: I want to know more.

BD: It's just a movie. You know.

PN: Why aren't you writing poetry? Why aren't you doing the things you're really great at?

BD: Excuse me?

PN: Why aren't you writing poetry and doing the things you're really best at?

BD: Well, I do! But I'm just taking some time off here, you know, getting into something a little different.

PN: Does that mean you're relaxing?

BD: Yeah.

PN: So you're not going to be trying?

BD: Excuse me?

PN: So that means you're not going to be trying?!?

RM: That's leading the witness.

BD: Oh no, no, I'm gonna be trying very much.

Bob Dylan's written four songs for this movie. Can he tell us anything about those, please?

BD: Well, I haven't written those songs just yet (laughter)**.**

Well, they tell us that you have.

BD: I'm about to... (laughter)

What are they going to be about?
BD: They're gonna be about the movie.
Are they going to be protest songs?
BD: I hope so, yeah, (laughter) **if Richard allows them to be.**
Protesting about what?
BD: Protesting about the, well, elements in the movie, you know. You have to see the movie.
PN: You seem very uncertain, Mr. Dylan. Do you know a great deal about this movie yet?
FF: It's ten thirty in the morning!
BD: Yeah. I know enough about the movie. I didn't write the movie though, you know. A lot of the questions you maybe want to ask the writer.
PN: Nobody's interested in anybody but you.
BD: What?
PN: Nobody's interested in anybody but you, in this hall.
BD: Ah...

questions to Everett and Marquand

I'm from the *Guardian*. Can I ask Bob Dylan, if he says it's the right place as well as being the right time, is that place England? What do you think of England since you were last here? Do you like England?
BD: Oh, yeah, I love England.
What are your thoughts on this country at the moment?
BD: Well, I just got here yesterday, haven't been sleeping since then.
Are you looking forward to working here?
BD: Yeah.
You took your name from Dylan Thomas. Have you ever been back to Wales? I see you're going back there now. Are you still interested in Dylan Thomas?
BD: Oh, yeah.
Will you be making a trip back to his village, to where he was born and wrote?
RM: We're gonna be very close (Marquand whispers to BD).
BD: We're gonna be very close. (with a loud laugh)
How were you persuaded to do this film with Mr Marquand? What sort of bargaining chips did he use?
BD: I don't have any bargaining chips.
But why did this film stand out as opposed to any other?
BD: Well, you know, I'm not really doing nothing right now. Seemed like a good thing to do.
What about you Richard, how hard did you pursue him?
RM: I don't think I really pursued you Bob, did I?
BD: I don't think so.
RM: I heard that he was interested and we turned up at the house and we had an afternoon together and we seemed to like each other.
(to BD:) Did you like me?
BD: Yeah. I liked you? We drank a lot.
RM: That helped.
BD: After that...

In the words of Billy Parker, it says here you say: "You wake up, you're a star! But there ain't nothing to you no more. You're empty." Is that a sentiment that you would agree with?
BD: Some stars are like that, yeah.
Are you?
BD: No, I'm not like that, but I'm playing another character who is like that. I'm getting into my character right now! (laughter, applause)

Can you tell us what it is you find fascinating with this character?

BD: Well, he's a very self-made person, you know. Nobody ever gave him anything. He had to take it all.

PN: Why didn't you write the script yourself?

BD: I couldn't have written a script like this. This is beyond me.

PN: I don't think it is.

BD: (laughs)

PN: Why are you so modest?

BD: (laughs more)

PN: Why are you pretending to be inadequate? You're one of the great writers of this age.

BD: Well, thank you. thank you!

PN: Why don't you write a script yourself?

BD: I don't know. I'm just trying something different right now, you know.

Questions to Fiona & to Marquand about financing and distribution.

Could I ask Bob, are they going to give you any time off when they're doing the film, so you could sneak off and play, and if you're not, when are we going to see you play next?

BD: I don't know.

When are we going to see you play next?

BD: We've just finished a tour, so maybe sometime in a couple of years.

What are your plans after this film, Bob?

BD: Oh, just maybe drift around. Then we're goin' on another tour. Then we may be touring again.

PN: Are you easily bored, Mr. Dylan?

BD: I'm never bored!!

PN: Have you any notion of how bored you're gonna be doing this picture?

BD: Well... (disgusted) **maybe you'll be around.** (laughter)

This film is about stardom and how to handle stardom. Will you be drawing on your own experience on how to handle it?

BD: No, not really, you know. I don't consider myself a big star, other people do.

You are a poet and a singer and you are taking on the role of an actor which is, by its very nature a very different kind of role. How are you gonna handle that?

BD: Ah, I'll find some way.

inaudible comment... could be playing a very expressive role.

BD: Oh, I'll figure it out.

PN: Can I ask why you want to be an actor?

BD: I just want to see what it's like.

PN: But you've seen what it's like before.

BD: I wanna see it again (laughs)

PN: It obviously sickened you. It obviously put you off, because you haven't done it for ten or twelve years.

BD: Well, we'll see.

Is this the first time that you have to follow a script?

BD: No, I think I had to do it once before.

In *Pat Garret and Billy The Kid* was it more of an improvisation... you improvised the part or did you follow a script?

BD: Well, yeah, you know, we used to do TV shows where I used to have to follow a script.

A big thing in America is the music. How does this go along with the Bob Dylan protest songs of the sixties that you're apparently gonna be writing and singing in this film?

BD: I don't know.
You feel good about America at the moment?
BD: I've always felt good about America! Yeah. America's got big you know. It's not like... it's like there's all kinds of different parts to it, you know.
The parts that you used to write about, you felt very bitter about, very contemptuous about.... and you were very funny about it. Why aren't you funny about Ronald Reagan?
BD: Well, I mean, what's so funny about that? (laughter)
It's a terrible joke on the world!
BD: Wow, it's all a joke!
...inaudible...
BD: That doesn't sound like an English accent to me, does it?

BD: Well, I don't know. The sixties are gone you know.
Do you regret the myth of the legends that surround you?
BD: No.
But you give that impression.
BD: Well, you know, impressions can be misleading.
Have you lost your enthusiasm?
BD: For what?
For life and for writing.
BD: Nah!

Mr. Dylan, you've talked today about doing this picture because it's different you've said. You, in the past, have been in charge of your own destiny as an artist. But recently we've seen you collaborate with Sam Shepard to write an epic song. Here you're going to collaborate with others to make a movie. Does this mean that you've seen a change in your own artistic career and you're now going to do more things that involve collaborating with others or being involved in other people's projects, rather than simply doing your own work?
BD: Yes. It's not so much other people's projects as, you know, finding somebody to work on the same project with.
How did the project with Sam Shepard evolve?
BD: Well, I don't know, we wrote a bunch of things a few years ago and...
If you were rewriting *The Times They Are A-Changin'* now, if you were writing it now, how would you write it different? Or would you?
BD: No, it would be the same.
Would you say the eighties are same as the sixties or is there something different to protest now?
BD: Well, you know, if something's good, it transcends that, whatever generation or date, you know, that you write it.

questions to Fiona, Everett & Marquand

Bob Dylan, a lot of musicians have made entirely successful attempts to cross over into films. What impressions have you got from acting by, for example, Mick Jagger and David Bowie.
BD: I like them all in the films and Chris, I don't know...
Have you studied their attempts in any way? Tried to learn anything from them? Do you watch many films? If so, what sort of films?
BD: I don't remember the last film I saw. Couldn't have been... must have been great, I don't know...

...(inaudible comment)... bought all the albums and now we're forty. Have you got anything to say to them?

BD: Just keep buying them! (laughter) **Who's buying them?**

What are you reading at present?

BD: I was reading a biography of Ulysses S. Grant.

He used to get very drunk I believe.

BD: Who did?

Ulysses S. Grant.

BD: Yeah, well I haven't got to that part yet (laughter)

What else about him is interesting to you? A drunken civil war general from the Northern side. I thought you sympathized with the South.

BD: Ah. I thought he was OK.

RM: The artists have to rehearse this afternoon so we've only got five minutes.

Can we just try to get one fact out of this press conference?

RM: Which fact would you like, sir?

How much longer are you going to continue making great music?

BD: Huh?

How much longer are you going to continue making great music?

BD: I don't know. Maybe a couple of weeks.

How much are they paying you to make this movie?

RM: I've already answered that. I can tell you it's a very reasonable sum.

BD: It's not enough. (laughs)

...(inaudible comment)... you did the last tour with Petty for the money. Can we take that to be a new philosophy of yours?

BD: I'm always doing tours for the money! I mean, you know, what's so new about that?

Where did you learn *Belle Isle*?

BD: Huh?

Where did you learn *Belle Isle*?

BD: Where? I don't know

JB: Bob, I was watching *The Maltese Falcon* recently, and it was full of lines that sounded as though you could have written them. Do you recall watching that film before you wrote the *Empire Burlesque* songs?

BD: Which film?

JB: *The Maltese Falcon*.

BD: I might have seen it. Were there lines from the movie in there?

JB: Lots of them.

BD: Were there really?

JB: Yes, Is it one of your favorite films, that?

BD: I don't remember. Which lines were they?

JB: Do you want a list?

interrupted by questions about shooting of the concert scenes

Although you are playing a retired rock star in the movie are you actually appearing live?

RM: You mean will the concerts be open to the public?

Well... (inaudible)

BD: Me, yeah.

RM: There are a series of concerts throughout the film going from small and up to large. They will not be open to the public. They will be controlled film events.

Are you deliberately elusive with the press or just shy?

BD: I don't know. (mumbling)

Can I just ask, are the Heartbreakers gonna be in the movie and are you gonna tour with the Heartbreakers again?

BD: I don't think they're in this movie.

Are you going to perform with them again or is that finished now?

BD: Maybe.

Questions to the others

What are your impression of the British press? (laughter)

BD: The press is, like, the same all over the world, you know. They're the same all over.

September 1986
Anti-drug message, Hearts of Fire locations, probably Wales

Source: *Circulating tape*

This is Bob Dylan. I'm in England right now working, so I can't be there tonight, but I'd like to say that I think Chabad is a worthy organization helping people in need. Helping to set them free from the misconceptions and devastation which is destroying their lives from within. Of course, this is a fierce battle, for those responsible for poisoning the minds and bodies of America's youth are reaping great profits. If you can help Chabad to help others who have fallen victims to the lies and deceits of those who are much more powerful, do so.

20 September 1986
Christopher Sykes interview #1, Colston Hall, Bristol

Source: *Getting to Dylan*, BBC Arena documentary

CS: Is there a particular scene in the film either as written or looking ahead that you think is specially significant?

BD: Not really. I don't even know the scenes in the script to tell you the truth, you know. (laughs) **They're all good, I guess. But I'm a perfectionist maybe in other areas than movie making. It's helpful to work with these… some of these people that know so much more about it… Rupert… Some of these other people… Guys that play…** (mumble) **promoter… these guys are good, you know. So they just make you good.**

26 September – 9 October 1986
Excerpt from "*Venue*" (Bristol) #115

Source: *Rolling Telegraph Supplement*, #6, pp. 17-18.

Only 2nd and 3rd paragraphs are copied below. The rest of this longish article brings no other direct quotes from Dylan.

Colston Hall Revisited

Last Thursday, Music Video West were producing a demo tape for a local band called Kick City when the telephone rang. The caller said that a client of his needed studio space urgently. On being told that there was no possibility of this at such short notice, he explained that his client was important but refused to reveal his identity.

At this point an American voice in the background was heard to say, **"It's okay. You can tell the guy who I am."** The name disclosed came as something of a shock to the man at MVW, who was understandably sceptical. By the time the client's credentials had been established, it was too late. He's changed his mind and had decided to blow the whole thing out. Music Video West had just turned down the spokesman for a generation.

30 September 1986
"Film '86", Electric Ballroom, Camden Town, London, England

Source: *Circulating tape*

The "Film '86" crew manages to get a lengthy interview with Richard Marquand and they ask Dylan for this very brief comment on his filming partner, Fiona Flanagan. Dylan is filmed in his trailer.

Q: In the film, Dylan co-stars with one Fiona who plays a fast rising musician. What dis he make of her?

BD: It was very easy to play opposite Fiona, because she is so good. I mean, she's one of the most dynamic performers I think I've ever really seen. She's very spontaneous and always wants the last word, you know. I think she's gonna go far doing anything she wants to do.

17/18 October 1986
Christopher Sykes Interview, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1069-1080.

During the filming for Hearts Of Fire in Canada, Dylan is interviewed on a number of occasions by Christopher Sykes from the BBC who is trying to put together a 'special' interview for the Omnibus program. The following is a transcript from the final program transmitted in the UK in September 1987. This session almost certainly took place on October 18, 1986 in Dylan's trailer on the set in Hamilton, Ontario. One of the other sessions was a 'dry run' interview which occurred a day earlier and this follows after the program transcript.

CS: One evening between scenes, in a kind of no man's land in the suburbs of Toronto, Dylan asked us into his trailer. He wasn't committing himself to an interview, proper, but said we could talk for a while and see how things went.

BD: We're just testing out here now, nothin' is for sure, we're just casting people here.

CS: We're casting a little scene. This is for our BBC documentary about the making of *Hearts of Fire* with special reference to Bob Dylan.

BD: Exactly!

CS: So tell... Actually. Bob...

BD: Wait a minute, wait a minute, just wait a second. I'll be right back...

Throughout the interview, Bob is sketching a picture of Sykes and there are many illusions to this picture and distractions because of it.

CS: How do you decide when to talk to people and when not to?
(Dylan laughs)

CS: I hope this isn't some horrible practical joke?

BD: Do you think I'm talking now?

CS: I don't know, maybe just playing around.
(Dylan laughs.)

CS: Why's it so amusing?

BD: I'm surprised you haven't really asked these questions of some other... er... like a Roger Daltrey, say, or Peter Townsend...

CS: Well, of course, I would.

BD: ...or Paul McCartney!

CS: If I'd been commissioned to make a movie that involved them, then I suppose I would be. I would be asking...

BD: You would have to, wouldn't you?

CS: Yeah.

BD: Well, you know, I'm not gonna say anything that you're gonna get any revelations about... It's not gonna happen.

CS: I'm saying, I'm not trying to do that. I hope you realize that...

BD: Could you grow your beard just a little bit more, er... like, next time? (referring to the sketch)

CS: Grow it?

BD: Yeah, grow it!

CS: I'd cut it off for you, you know that... So, you're not really doing anything you're telling us. It's just like...

BD: No. I'm trying to satisfy your need to probe into my private life and thoughts here in a way that's not going to embarrass me or... hopefully confound me... hopelessly. Hopefully not confound me. Okay, just press on...

CS: Could you tell me what you're doing?

BD: Huh?

CS: What are you doing?

BD: Well. I'm just gonna draw a... er... somethin' here. I'll show you what I'm gonna draw. Ordinarily I can draw... if it's good I'll show it to you, if not, forget it.

CS: And you talk while you're doing it? Because...

BD: Yeah, sure. I can talk while I'm doing it!

CS: ...the thing we were talking about earlier... I'm intrigued by this idea that your songs, a lot of them, are constructed like movies.

BD: My songs are?

CS: They have a very many things to say. Yeah. They are, like, compressed.

BD: Which ones?

CS: *All Along The Watchtower*, for example, I heard it by Hendrix first. I have to say... But something I really love is the song and I listen to totally different versions of it. It's like very tight visual imagery...

BD: Yeah.

CS: ...as though it's been written at enormous length and then had things stripped out of it, leaving only just these kind of key images and then sort of suggestions of sound and stuff in it. I suppose what I want to know is, when you write a song, am I right about you doing it like that?

BD: No.

CS: How do you...

BD: Many ways...

CS: They're stories with visual images. That's what I'm saying. Like the...

BD: I don't know whether they are... They are, whatever they are, to whoever is listening to them. Er... no. I don't do those things. I don't have any plan. I don't have any set way of writing songs.

CS: That's a very amusing idea.

BD: Huh?

CS: That's a very amusing idea.

BD: What, writing songs?

CS: No, drawing this picture.

BD: Wait till you see it! (laughing)

CS: Are you going to sign it?

BD: Am I gonna sign it? I may not even show it to you! Ha! Ha!

CS: I read this wonderful article once about Schubert...

BD: Yeah?

CS: ...and this guy was saying, I've never forgotten this, he said that listening to all these Schubert songs you have to think that he was connected to some kind of pipe down which all this stuff came.

BD: A pipe?

CS: Yeah, some sort of a pipe or conduit, you know. 'Cause he couldn't kind of grasp that this guy Schubert was writing all these songs himself.

BD: Yeah?

CS: The question was where did they kinda come from? He was saying that you could only really... he managed to write in a kind of way that chilled you a bit, you know? And he said you could only speculate on who or what the other end of the pipe was connected to. Now, I suppose, I want to know where all your songs come from.

BD: Well, I can't tell you that cause I'm not God, y'know? God only knows those things.

CS: Well, some people think... (laughing)... you are. I dunno.

BD: Well, (laughing) **they said that about Eric Clapton too, didn't they?**

CS: You just write them just like someone punches... ah...

BD: I just write 'em.

CS: ...rivet holes?

BD: ...just write 'em. I don't know. You know? I just write 'em cause nobody says you can't write 'em. Not least where I come from...

CS: The actual business and technical stuff of how you lay it out – there's plenty of people who know how to do that, but you know how to tell stories.

BD: Really?

CS: Well, you like to do stories in songs.

BD: Not really.

CS: No?

BD: I don't know how many stories I've written.

CS: Just some observations?

BD: Yeah, I wouldn't call them stories. Stories are things which have a beginning middle and end. My things are more like... er... short... er short attention span things that happens in a group of crowded people... that goes down... er... very quickly so... er... you, er... normally I wouldn't even notice it.

CS: I have to look at my list! I don't usually find it that difficult to speak to... to ask most people questions but someone of...

BD: Here's your list. I'll bet! (The list has been used by Bob for his drawing) **Here's your list.**

CS: Oh, right.

BD: ...Right here. Alright... This is fucked up here...

CS: You know...

BD: ...This is not right

CS: I mean, you know how people think you're some kind of shaman, don't they?

BD: Shaman?

CS: Yeah. Just a word. I mean, that has to want of a better word...

BD: Yeah? I don't know, man. I mean, I wish you'd tell some people that write... keep writin' me... I don't know what people think of me. I only know about what, you know, record companies say to you... you know and er... you know, managers, people like that... you know, people... that want you to do things... I only know, I only hear about that stuff.

CS: Can you just tell me something about this business, Bob, again, about what other people seem to want to do with you, and what you feel about that?

BD: It's not me! It's everybody, you know? Everyone's a puppet master. Nobody likes to control puppets and pull their strings without saying that. "I am nobody's puppet, nobody pulls my strings" You know? And er... I'm sorry. I just don't... er... I don't like that scene.

CS: You see, I think... Oh. I'm sorry...

BD: Let me see... Wait. I just got one more thing to do. But that's all... that's all...

CS: You see. I think that does mean that... You insist that everyone's more or less the same. I think you're extraordinarily special, that you manage to be nobody's puppet.

BD: Listen, I've come through good times and bad times. You know? So I'm not fooled by good times, bad times. Right now. Yeah, you're makin' a movie, you know? You're playin' some big tours... but I've seen the bottom too, you know? So er, you know... if you can work, you know, that's the most... all you can ask. In this day and age, you can't take that for granted. Just, to work is, is... er... to be able to work is, is what a person should strive after, you know?

CS: I think I know what you mean but a lot of people in England, watching our film... when they hear that, you know, where we've got a lot of unemployment...

BD: Yeah and it stinks too!

CS: ...they might think it's all very well for Bob Dylan to say that. I mean, he's got a whole lot of money and stuff!

BD: Whole lot of money?

CS: You don't mean money, do you?

BD: I don't mean money! I started out with no money. Don't tell 'em that! I don't want to hear about the money! I had less money than anybody I know, when I started out. I had no money! I mean, if you're talking about... er, you know... paper money... er... and, and, and money in the bank or value, wealth, er... what do you call... er... you know, possessions and all that stuff. I had nothing, you know? So, it's not like I went out and got into music to make money. There wasn't any money to be made in music when I was in... If you could just support yourself, you were doing good. There wasn't any money. It wasn't this big, big... er... billion dollar industry, that it is today. And people do go into it, er... just to make money because it's a... er... it's proved that you can make money in that field. But... er... that's a sad thing, you know? I guess... because it changes the quality of the... er... work that's being done and you can tell if you listen to the... you know, popular tastes of people. Er, what they've been given is a different thing than... er...

CS: Do you know, Bob, about the song...
(Bob holds up the sketch and an unknown female voice responds) That's good! That's very good!

CS: It looks extremely flattering! Can you say a bit more, Bob, about the sort or music that you say people are being fed out of this, what I suppose is this vast money-making machine?

BD: Well, it's going to... It's about to change... It's about to change... It's about to change... It will change. Yeah... er... y'know, machines are making most of the music now. Have you noticed that? Have you noticed that, that all songs sound the same? I mean. I don't know if you've noticed that... I mean, that, er, maybe you could be hearing one song, you know... that you could take the lyrics from another song and put it right on to, eh... because the rhythms are the same, and the drums are the same, and the machines can only do so much, you know. They can only, you know, make it sound different so many different kind of ways. So it doesn't sound different, sounds all the same. And er... that's good, for the industry, because a lot of people are, er... invent these machines and need, you know... and sell these machines plus it's also very good because a person... er... Now, the good things you can do with them is, er, you could... you could have your own little band, like a one man band, with these machines, you know what I mean? But that's not the point. The point really isn't to be a one man band unless you can play an instrument like a one man band, you know? I remember Roger McGuinn, years ago, used to take a tape recorder up on stage long before synthetic music became popular and he used to play the background track from one of his songs and he'd stand there and sing it! That was done... I think he was probably the first person to ever do that! But that type of music doesn't have any roots and it doesn't have any foundation to it, y'see, and, er, so...
Man. I really messed your hair up on one side here...
And then there's a lot of kids, all around, they just don't like it and so what they're doing is they're buying instruments and playing. But they don't listen to those records either. They're listening to the old records. So there's a lot of young groups, young kids that are playing music, which I see, which play the old style of music. And they're all kids now but in four or five years they won't be and, and that, that, that's all gonna turn around... all gonna turn around. That's what I see, anyway...

CS: Is that gonna be good?

BD: Oh yeah, yeah. Er... because, you know, there are certain rules and regulations to it. I mean, er... you just don't just sit down and write a song, you know what I mean. . There's a certain amount of learning you have to go through to get to that point.
And ah... not only living experience but, I mean, you also have to learn how to play an instrument. Some kinda... you know, you have to carry some kind of tune. I guess. So yeah, that is gonna be good. That is gonna be good. (long pause). **I just said it would be!**

CS: In the hotel I'm staying in, I'm in room 801, and in 802, I find that there's a girl called Sara Dylan.

BD: Really? Jesus!

CS: I had a drink with her and she tells me she's your sister.

BD: Uh, boy! What's she look like?

CS: She says that she looks very like you.

BD: I mean...

CS: I mean, she's dark and she's ten years younger than you and she has this extraordinary delusion.

BD: Well, there are people who follow me around, you know, and they have passports and they have driver's licenses and they all have Dylan as their name. Er, you know, there isn't... What can I do about that? I mean, I can't do nothing about that. They change their name on their birth certificate, and all that, you know? What are you asking me about? I don't know.

CS: I suppose because I found it slightly frightening. I mean, you know?

BD: Well, you should report her to the local constable or something. She's an impersonator. I guess, you know? I don't know.

CS: One does think about John Lennon getting shot and maybe you have to worry about something like that. Or what if you've made some kind of decision that you're not going to.

BD: What decision?

CS: Well. I mean you don't have sort of security people around you and so on, I mean, and you came... you apparently flew up to Toronto...

BD: Oh some... many times I have security people around me! Only you just can't see them, that's all! Nobody knows ever who's with me or who's not. I don't advertise who I come in with.

CS: But is that something that bothers you ever? I mean, the idea that because you are very famous, someone who thinks they love you might want to kill you?

BD: Well, that's always the case, isn't it? (laughs) **Isn't that the way it always happens? Aren't you usually killed by the person who loves you the most? I don't know. I mean, Jesse James was, supposedly. I mean, some guy got in close to him, you know, who he thought was his good friend...**

CS: What do you think of the drawing?

BD: Ah, I don't know. Bunch of things that I don't like about it, but I'll get it right. It's like, uh, I got enough love around me, you know? So I don't need no people's love. I don't need to go out to play to a crowd of twenty, thirty, fifty-thousand people for their love. Some performers have to, you know, but I don't. I got enough love, just er... in my immediate surroundings, so... so I don't care... I don't need er... Do you know what I'm talkin' about?

CS: I'm... listening... because I am fascinated by what you're talking about and so that would account for...

BD: Well, it accounts for why a lot of entertainers do what they do. Because they want the love of a... er... of another group of people, you know. I don't do it for love. I do it because I can do it and I think I can do it and I think I'm good at it, ya know? And that's all I do it for.

CS: Is that... does that explain why the other evening at that sort of mock concert, you didn't sort of say anything to the audience? You know, people in the press said well people turned up to this thing and why didn't Dylan just say hello?

BD: What was I supposed to say hello for? It doesn't have nothin' to do with me. I'm out there making a movie. I'm not there in no crowd! What? Are you serious?

CS: Yeah. I'm serious. That's what they said.

BD: Well, why didn't you tell 'em?

CS: No. I mean. I just read it in the paper. And that made me wonder. I thought, why didn't you say it? I would. If it were me I'd feel the pressure. I'd feel the pressure.

BD: Naw! I'd say...

CS: I'd feel the pressure.

BD: No, no matter what you say it's not enough, is it? You know if I coulda gone out there and said, "Hello everybody? How ya doin' out there?" And they'd say, "Play a song, Bob, play a song!" And I'd say. "Oh man. I don't feel like it right now." And then that would be in the press – Dylan didn't... er... Dylan was grumpy. He's moody. He's a recluse. He came out for a few minutes. He said hello to the audience and he went back into his trailer or something... into the seclusion of his own little kingdom. Which is what, you know, people would say. I'm just actually quoting you almost verbatim on something that has been said.

CS: So you say its always a losing situation.

BD: What?

CS: In terms of...

BD: Not for me! 'Cause I don't play that game. Ah, maybe I'm not done yet. Still got something I wanna do... I don't play that game. And you wouldn't either if you were in my shoes. You wouldn't play that game. People treat famous people all the same... doesn't matter what the person's famous for. You could be famous for... er... er... shooting of a President or something. You know what I mean? You're still famous. They put your name across all the newspapers. You're famous for somethin'. You could be a famous fashion designer, a famous movie star, or famous Wall Street executive – so depending on your degree of fame – you're just famous. People react to famous people, y'know? So if you talk to famous people – and I guess I'm one of them because I have a certain degree of notoriety and fame, umm -everybody just kinda copes with it in a different way. But really nobody seems to think it's what they went after, you know? Lot of people go after fame and money, but they're really after money. They don't really want the fame, you know? Because fame is the... er... you know, to walk down the street and... or to go somewhere, and have people... It's like when you look through a window... Say, you're passing a little pub or a little inn, and you look through the window and you see all the people eating, talking and carrying on. You watch outside the window, and you can see them all be very real with each other, as real as they're gonna be. Because when you walk into the room, it's over! You won't see them being real anymore. That's usual.

CS: That's you and not me!

BD: No, no, no. Me, and even if you're in a room, you'll notice that things have changed. Things have changed just because a person walks into a room that can be a focus point for everybody, you know? I don't know. Maybe that's got something to do with it. I really can't say. I don't pay any attention to it!

CS: Is it a drag then? No, you just said you don't pay any attention to it.

BD: No, I don't pay any attention to it! Just don't! Life is short, you know? And, what do most people want from me? They want your autograph. Nobody knows me and I don't know them! You know? They walk up and they think they know me because I've written some song that, er, happens to... er... bother them in a certain way and they can't get rid of it, you know, in their mind. That's got nothing to do with me! They still don't know me. And I still don't know them. So they walk, you know, up as if, ah, "Excuse me," you know, as if we're long lost brothers or sisters, or something! You know, that's kinda... you know. I think I could prove that in any court!

CS: You're very generous towards people, autograph hunters, aren't you? I mean. I noticed that, particularly at Bristol. I mean, you had to sign about sixty. You know. I mean you could choose not to do that.

BD: Well, sometimes, ah, it's easier to be polite than it is to be rude. Sometimes, the other way around.

CS: And how do you judge when? Which way...

BD: My instincts. There's a song we used to sing called *Trust Yourself*. Sort of like that... that was kinda about that... (*Trust Yourself* can be heard playing in the background.)

CS: I don't know that song.

BD Now, if you really want to make this documentary great, you'll go back and get a clip.

CS: You know we'll do it!

BD: *Trust Yourself*.

CS: Yes!

BD: You'll stick that in right there. (Holding up his finished sketch and a copy of *Lyrics*, he continues) **See the similarities here? I'm not sure I'd show this to anybody actually.**

CS: When you were jamming with the others the other night...

BD: I hope you're gonna give me a break here to get ready for my scene!

CS: Yeah. I'm just gonna... about to do that, thanks.

BD: Been talking too long (almost as an aside)

CS: Okay. Well look, well, thank you very much, Bob.

BD: Okay, I don't know if we answered any questions or not, but... (now referring to, the sketch) **Wha'd'ya think?**

CS: It looks very good.

BD: You oughta see it like that, you know (hanging the sketch on a cupboard). **I think maybe I'll keep it in here for awhile, kinda remind me of you when you leave.**

CS: You said, "*People say I can't act, but they say I can't sing either*."

BD: I said that?

CS: Yes.

BD: You sure it wasn't Rupert who said that? (laughs).

CS: Well, I'd like you to say it now.

BD: What?

CS: So this is my question to get you to say it: How do you rate your acting potential?

BD: My what?

CS: Your acting potential.

BD: What are we doing here?

CS: I just want you to say this line; that you've got to remember, this scripted line: "*People say I can't act, but they say I can't sing either.*"

BD: Who said I can't act? Haha, I mean, who?

CS: You said it.

BD: Oh, gee. I don't remember saying that. Why would I say something like that?

CS: Can I ask you, what makes a good song?

BD: Melody. Rhythm. That stuff, I guess. But mostly it's sentiment. Whether you can identify with what the sentiment of the song is, what the song says, as a song. That's what makes a good song. Someone would say, "this is a good song," and someone else would say, "That's a good song". Whether it's true for anybody makes it a good... anything. You can't say that about a tree or a leaf or a vegetable though. You only say that about man-made things. Nobody ever judges God's creations, right? Nobody ever says, That tree looks prettier than that tree. There's no judgment in nature. Did you ever notice that?

CS: So how's it done, to make all these good songs?

BD: I don't know. I have no idea.

CS: Is writing songs a disciplined thing, like a job?

BD: No, no. Some people do work like that, I know what you mean. For me it's if I have enough time to concentrate. I need that. A lot of times I might think of something, but if I'm not in the right place to carry it through, it just won't get done. Won't happen. I don't really think of myself as a writer, actually. I mean, there are guys around who are trained as writers, to observe. I don't think of myself as a writer, I really don't. I write

songs, y'know, but I just write the lyrics to those songs to sing. Sometimes the lyrics change before I get 'em into the studio to record them, and then when I get 'em out of the studio I'll make changes when I have to play them live. So they will change.

CS: Not only do you change the words to the songs when you sing them – I can understand that – but sometimes you change the treatment from performance to performance. You play around with it, so that it's not a fixed thing.

BD: I do, yeah, but I've just sort of done it out of necessity. Maybe I have a show on the road and I need to do songs, so I'm forced up to it. I'll do songs that I think are important to put in a particular place. You know, one day a ballad singer was someone who carried the news from town to town, or set himself up somewhere where he could play things to people who could understand them in a certain way. I don't know of any today who are still doing that. Now, things are a little bit more worldwide. Then, if there was a fire in one county, you might not even hear about it in the next county. Now, with communication being so widespread, everybody knows about everything no matter where it's going on – or they think they know about it. That's a whole other subject. I don't even think you really know about it anyway, even if you do see it on TV or hear it on the news, I still think you have no idea what's going on. If what you're seeing is even a replica of anything that really has happened, or is happening. I wonder about the time when all those guys, Mozart and Haydn and even Beethoven himself, and Strauss, Chopin, you know, those guys were the pop heroes of their day, but there must also have been ballad singers around -more so than today even – and they'd have been playing in all the drawing rooms of the court, for audiences of maybe six people, so the people never got to see them. I used to see street singers – I used to be one! I did it for two or three years, but I ran into people that had been doing it for twenty or thirty years, and boy, they knew how to handle a crowd, that's for sure.

CS: Do you know how to do that?

BD: Handle a crowd? Yeah, I can make enough noise to handle a crowd.

CS: You were talking about doing your songs differently in concerts...

BD: You know why that happens? It's because a lot of times my records were made... especially in the '70's... I took a lot of songs into the studio that I really wasn't that familiar with. I just had written them, so I don't know... and it depends on what musicians you have playing with you – like, what can they do, you know? And sometimes I've been in the studio with bands – just studio guys that have been put together – and you have to figure out which way this band's gonna play, especially if you want to do six songs in a session.

CS: You like to get it over and done with, don't you? You don't want to spend a year doing an album, like some of these other stars now do...

BD: I wouldn't mind spending a year on an album, I mean, if it was worth my while (laughs).

CS: Worth your while?

BD: If somebody said to me to try to do a certain thing that took a year or something like that. I don't know why you'd spend a year on an album. I guess you could go off to Rio for part of the time, y'know, record down there, and then maybe take a quick ride to Paris, record there for a couple of weeks. Ha, ha. I don't know how you'd spend a year on an album. How's it done? I don't know.

CS: To get it right?

BD: Well! That must be the reason! To get it right. I always figure it can always be more right, so you can always wonder about that. I know I have.

CS: Do you listen to your albums?

BD: No, I really don't. I overhear them sometimes when other people have 'em on, but I don't listen to them. I don't listen to anybody's albums really. Most records – new records- you buy, check them out, see what somebody's doing, but as for sitting down and needing to hear it, y'know, time and time again, throughout your day and night just

to feel connected to something, I don't hear nothing around like that these days. I mean for me, you know. Other people may find that for them those songs do that.

CS: Do you have an idea about the way you'd like your album to be listened to – just coming out of radio or buses...?

BD: Yeah, well, look man, I gotta go, I'm out the door.

CS: But can we just keep this thing going a little bit. It's probably much more interesting to us than it is to you.

BD: I gotta eat though! I gotta see somebody.

CS: Do you know what I mean? That there might be a way in which you sort of imagine them being listened to?

BD: No, I don't. I don't. I don't know where that fits in to what we're talking about.

CS: I was looking through your lyrics. There aren't very many political songs in there.

BD: I don't know which of my songs was ever political.

CS: *Masters Of War* is.

BD: I don't know if even *Masters Of War* is a political song. Politics of what? If there is such a thing as politics, what is it politics of? Is it spiritual politics? Automotive politics? Governmental politics? What kind of politics? Where does this word come from, politics? Is this a Greek word or what? What does it actually mean? Everybody uses it all the time. I don't know what the fuck it means. Left, right, rebel. Some people are rebels. Let's see. Afghanistan are rebels, but they're OK. Nicaragua's got rebels and they're OK. Their rebels are all right. But in El Salvador the rebels are the bad guys. If you listen to that stuff you go crazy. You don't even know who you are any more. It don't make any sense to me. I don't see good guy, bad guy. It's that Dave Mason song, "There ain't no good guy, there ain't no bad guy, there's only you and me and we just disagree." True or what?

CS: We all have our favorite rebels I guess.

BD: Yeah! That must be it!

CS: Who do you admire?

BD: Who is there to admire now? Some world leader? Who? I could probably think of many people actually that I admire. There's a guy who works in a gas station in LA -old guy. I truly admire that guy.

CS: What's he done?

BD: What's he done? He helped me fix my carburetor once.

CS: You are serious, aren't you, about the gasman?

BD: Hmm.

CS: You're putting a lot of work and a lot of time into this film, and then you say you're not going to see it.

BD: Oh. I may see it. I might go see it. I don't know. I'm not sure about the date it's gonna open. (Laughs).

CS: You say it's a joy to work with Fiona, that she's got what it takes.

BD: I think so. I think she could be the next Joan Crawford. (laughs).

CS: I think I meant as a singer.

BD: I'm talking about acting. As a singer? She could be the next anybody. She don't have to be the next anybody; she could be the first one like her.

CS: What does it take?

BD: What do you think? What do you really think?

CS: Well, the trouble is I can't use my answer.

BD: Well, gimme an answer and I'll say it.

CS: Well, the kind of talent which is rather indefinable, and some kind of determination to use it despite feeling that it's terribly difficult and so on, and also despite all the pressures from other people to get you to do something else rather than doing that: to survive all the manipulation and negotiation that I suppose goes with people wanting to use this

talent that you happen to have, to get what they want, which might not be the same as what you might want to be doing. That kind of thing, I suppose.

BD: Well!

CS: Do you make friends with these people you're working with? I'm kind of interested.

BD: (Laughs) **You should work in Beverley Hills, man! You should have a little clinic!** (Laughs). **Charge people $500 for every 10 minutes.**

CS: Like Prince's Dr Feelalright?

BD: Yeah!

CS: Do you like Prince's stuff?

BD: Prince? Yeah. Who don't like Prince? Well, I guess I could name a few! (Laughs) **No, he's a fantastic guy, ain't he? He can do anything, can't he?**

CS: Do you have any future movie plans?

BD: Yeah I do have plans to make a movie with Alan Rudolph next fall.

CS: With who?

BD: Alan Rudolph. He's a movie director. He's a bright guy, It's a complicated story, about a piano player who gets into trouble because of a good buddy of his, and then he winds up doing some book work for a woman whose husband has disappeared, marries her, then falls in love with her daughter. And the other guy finally shows up again and the movie comes to a screeching halt.

CS: So how do you decide which kind of a script attracts you? Or, why this one? Because I've got to tell you, when I read this script I just thought... well, as it turns out I can see it's all working, but when I first read the script, I've got to be honest, I didn't think it looked too good.

BD: Well, I'd heard that too, you know. I heard that But... I dunno. I guess it's better than it looks!

CS: Quite a bit of it's changed. You mentioned to me the other day that you're writing a novel.

BD: Nah, nah.

CS: Was that a joke?

BD: I started... You always like to think you're writing a novel. To write a novel you've got to be able to concentrate on it for a long period of time. I know people who've written 'em, and they just stick with 'em for a year or more maybe and live pretty cut off in the meantime. I don't know if I could do that because I tour and move around. Maybe someday. Maybe I'll have something to say.

CS: You like the names of places, don't you? Like Baton Rouge.

BD: Belfast! (laughs) **Whitney Houston** (laughs)**. Sounds like the name of a town, don't it? I love the sound of words, yeah.**

CS: Sometimes you often use the phrase "who cares?" Obviously you care, deeply, about certain things – and I suppose I'd like to know what those are.

BD: I suppose you would!

CS: I suppose you're not going to tell me either, so I suppose I'll forget it...

10 November 1986
Juno Awards, CBC-TV, Toronto, Ontario

Source: *Circulating tape*

Bob Dylan presents a Juno Award to Gordon Lightfoot. Dylan keeps his gloves on even when shaking hands with Gordon Lightfoot, which may confirm the story of his hand injury given in "Chronicles, Volume One" (p. 145).

Hostess: Each year the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences pays tribute to a Canadian artist for his or her outstanding artistry and international achievement in music. Tonight recipient's career has bridged more than two decades and his music has touched millions. The poetic excellence of this balladeer has made him a legend in our time. From musicians breaking into entertainment business by learning to play "Early Morning Rain" to the vast number of performers who have recorded this song, he has inspired many. But who inspires Gordon Lightfoot? When asked, "Who is your favorite songwriter?" Gordon said, "Of all them altitudes around, I'd have to go with Bob Dylan." Ladies and gentlemen, Bob Dylan.

[long applause while Dylan is trying to find a way from his backstage room to the scene; Hostess nervously laughs]

Hostess: Bob Dylan.

BD: Ah. Sure it's good to be here and to give this award to Gordon. I've known Gordon for a long time. I know he's been offered this award before, but he has never accepted it, because he wanted me to come to give it to him. So… [audience laugh]. Anyway, he's somebody of a rare talent and all that. And here's a videoclip now of his recent and not so recent achievements.

[short film plays]

BD: All right, here he is now, Gordon Lightfoot.

[BD and GL can be barely heard talking off mike]

23 November 1986
Donald Chase interview for *San Francisco Chronicle*

Source: *The Rolling Telegraph Supplement* #6, p. 21

BLOOD ON THE TRACKS
By DONALD CHASE
London

THREE OR FOUR bars into the bluesy-country-rock number, before he can even begin singing, Bob Dylan is pelted with lighted cigarettes and cries of "Off! Off! Off!" To the audience of punks and skinheads, the singer's musical gentleness is as passé as his halo of chestnut hair.

After Dylan's exit, Fiona, his young backup, restores order by ripping into the hard-driving "Hair of the Dog." Then at song's end, she 'calls Dylan back onstage, admonishing the audience that "if it wasn't for him, we wouldn't be here."

Dylan reappears—to huzzahs. But his craggy face is wearily impassive. He knows too much to be moved by the crowd's fickle enthusiasm.

"This business is gonna eat you up," he says later to Fiona. **"Just like it was gonna get me. It's this big machine. It gets you in its teeth, it sucks everything out of you. You wake up, you're a star. So... you're a star! But there ain't nothing to you no more. You're empty."**

As Billy Parker in the currently shooting "*Hearts of Fire*," Dylan is "perfect casting," says director Richard Marquand. In the drama-with-music. which 20th Century Fox will release next summer, the musical legend plays a legendary musician emerging from a decade-long self-imposed exile in rural western Pennsylvania.

Parker agrees to perform in England because of the opportunity to promote Molly McGuire (Fiona), his protégée-heartthrob. But his arrival coincides with her fall for Brit rock-sensation-of-the-moment James Colt (Rupert Everett).

"It's not exactly like me doing Shakespeare," says Dylan of his role. **"It's not a stretch in that sense. You could say that** (like Parker) **I'm somebody who became famous through music and that I had certain feelings about fame."**

All this is by way of suggesting that, despite their similarities, Parker is a character separate from Dylan. **"Really,"** Dylan says, **"there are a hundred guys I know who could have played this role."**

Not that Dylan is taking this assignment casually. According to Marquand, before accepting the role, Dylan not only asked, **"Do you think I can do it?"** but also submitted to what the director calls "a private screen test." And there is on the set whenever Dylan is shooting, a dialogue coach.

Whatever insecurities Dylan may have had about acting, Marquand says he had "very definite ideas" about his character. "He contributed ideas about what might have happened in Parker's past, making it rougher than what I had been thinking."

"It's a much more professional way of making a movie," Dylan says, comparing the give-and-take on this project with his less collaborative association in 1973 with Sam Peckinpah on "*Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*."

"That was Peckinpah's kingdom—and he was sort of a madman. He kept saying, 'It's my movie, my movie'."

In fact, though, to a significant extent, "*Hearts of Fire*" is Marquand's movie, providing him an opportunity to put on film some of his own notions about American innocence and European experience.

With his 1960s and '70s frame of reference, Dylan's crusty 40-year-old rocker is certainly more experienced than Fiona's 19-year-old Molly, Marquand allows. "But they're Americans" he says, "and so they both come to Europe as innocents.

"I'm talking about London as an overcivilized place with its sense of the past. And on top of that you have this superstructure of elegance and music and fashion and, in the background, guerrilla warfare and people being blown up in Harrods (department store). It's the Europe that attracts and frightens Americans at the same time, this freewheeling yet eccentric world personified in the film by James Colt, who's trapped in the pitfalls of fame that Billy decided to avoid and Molly is now threatened with."

FIONA—NEE Fiona Flanagan—is the 25-year-old singer-songwriter who became a hot pop figure last year with the release of her first LP, "*Fiona*," and its follow-up, "*Beyond the Pale*." "She sort of reminds me of myself at 19," Fiona says of Molly McGuire. "I can remember arriving in New York from a town in New Jersey that's probably not too different from Molly's hometown, and not knowing where the Upper West Side was—though it's kind of self-explanatory, isn't it?

"And I've been harassed in the studio as she is, and I've been in relationships with men I worked with. A lot of the scenes in the movie are scenes I've had at home. I'll be in the middle of one and it doesn't seem like I'm acting—it's a little scary."

Rupert Everett has little firsthand knowledge of the music world—and in fact will be singing publicly for the first time in "*Hearts of Fire*." But the British-born star of "*Another Country*" and "*Dance With a Stranger*" says he, too, is playing close to the vest here: His own admiration for Dylan corresponds to his character's respect for Parker.

"Our characters were originally written as adversaries," Everett recalls, "but Richard Marquand and Bob and I decided that was too simple—and boring—and not necessarily true. Instead, we now really like each other, which makes things interestingly complicated when all starts to go wrong because we love the same girl."

The music in "*Hearts of Fire*" will extend the film's generational and cultural contrasts. Everett will sing arrogant, hi-tech English '80s numbers (by the Brit group Wang Chung); Fiona will do mainstream contemporary American rock; and Dylan's music (including two new songs by Dylan himself) will have its roots in the '60s.

"It's supposed to be Parker's old stuff," Dylan says, **"but I didn't want to emphasize that too much because I don't really like nostalgia.** (It's) **stuff I** (personally) **could have written then—or that I could write tomorrow."**

In all, 22 song tracks have been prerecorded for "*Hearts of Fire*"—too many, everyone agrees.

"I don't think," says Marquand, "you can expect people to sit still for three minutes, 20 times, while someone sings a song. But I also can't forget music is central to the characters' lives. So the plan is to have some full songs, as well as many parts of songs, and integrate them with a story that—I hope—will say something about what it's like to be human in 1987."

(Donald Chase is a frequent contributor to City Lights.)

October(?) 1987
Date and place unknown; Kurt Loder interview for Rolling Stone

Published in *Rolling Stone* Nov 5 – Dec 10, 1987. Available at expectingrain.com

KL: Did you start out wanting to be a star?

BD: Not really, because I always needed a song to get by. There's a lot of singers who don't need songs to get by. A lot of 'em are tall, good-lookin', you know? They don't need to say anything to grab people. Me, I had to make it on something other than my looks or my voice.

KL: What was it that made you decide to become a rock & roll songwriter?

BD: Well, now, Chuck Berry was a rock & roll songwriter. So I never tried to write rock & roll songs, 'cause I figured he had just done it. When I started writing songs, they had to be in a different mold. Because who wants to be a second-rate anybody? A new generation had come along, of which I was a part – the second generation of rock & roll people. To me, and to others like me, it was a way of life. It was an all-consuming way of life.

KL: What was the rock scene like when you arrived in New York in the early Sixties?

BD: What was happening was Joey Dee and the Starliters, which was, like, a twisting scene. There was a big twist craze. There were little pockets, I guess, all across the country where people were playin' rock & roll music. But it was awfully difficult. I knew some guys that played in the Village, and to make some extra money they would play in midtown clubs like the Metropole, which used to be a burlesque house on Seventh Avenue. Those were pretty funky places. You could play for six hours and make ten dollars, and there'd be some girl stripping all the time. Pretty degrading gig. But economics being what they are, you got to make some kinda money to exist with electric instruments. That's what got me out of it, actually. It was just too hard.

KL: So you opted for folk music.

BD: Folk music creates its own audience. Because you can take a guitar anywhere, anytime. Most of the places we played in the early days were all parties – house parties, rent parties. Any kind of reason to go play someplace and we'd be there.

KL: Were you surprised by the public reaction to your early songs, or by your eventual mass acceptance?

BD: Not really. 'Cause I paid my dues. It didn't happen overnight, you know. I came up one step at a time. And I knew when I'd come up with somethin' good. For instance, "*Song to Woody*," on my first record: I knew that no one had ever written anything like that before.

KL: Still, given your unique style of writing and singing, you did seem an unlikely candidate for stardom on the pop scene in the mid-Sixties.

BD: Well, I wasn't tryin' to get onto the radio. I wasn't singin' for Tin Pan Alley. I'd given up on all that stuff. I was downtown, you know? I wanted to make records, but I thought the furthest I could go was to make a folk-music record. It surprised the hell out of me when I was signed at Columbia Records. I was more surprise than anybody. But I never let that stop me [laughs]**.**

KL: Did you ever feel that you had tapped into the *Zeitgeist* in some special sort of way?

BD: With the songs that I came up with?

KL: Yeah.

BD: As I look back on it now, I am surprised that I came up with so many of them. At the time it seemed like a natural thing to do. Now I can look back and see that I must have written those songs "in the spirit," you know? Like "*Desolation Row*" – I was just thinkin' about that the other night. There's no logical way that you can arrive at lyrics like that. I don't know how it was done.

KL: It just came to you?

BD: It just came out *through* me.

KL: By the time of "Desolation Row," in 1965, you had gone electric and had been more or less drummed out of the purist folk movement. Was that a painful experience?

BD: No. I looked at that as an opportunity to get back in to what I had been into a long time ago and to take it someplace further. Folk-music circles were very cold, anyway. Everybody was pretty strict and severe in their attitudes; it was kind of a stuffy scene. It didn't bother me that people didn't understand what I was doing, because I had been doing it long before they were around. And I knew, when I was doin' that stuff, that that hadn't been done before, either. Because I'd known all the stuff that had gone down before. I knew what the Beatles were doin', and that seemed to be real pop stuff. The Stones were doing blues things – just hard city blues. The Beach Boys, of course, were doin' stuff that I didn't think had ever been done before, either. But I also knew that I was doing stuff that hadn't ever been done before.

KL: Did you have more of a drive to write back then? More of drive to make it?

BD: Well, yeah, you had all those feelings that had been bottled up for twenty-some years, and then you got 'em all out. And once they're out, then you gotta start up again.

KL: Do you still get inspired the same way these days?

BD: I don't know. It's been a while since, uh ... What moves you to write is something that you care about deeply. You also have to have the time to write. You have to have the isolation to write. And the more demands that are put on you, the harder it is. I mean, it seems like everybody wants a piece of your time at a certain point. There was a time when nobody cared, and that was one of the most productive times, when nobody gave a shit who I was.

KL: Life gets complex as the years go by.

BD: Yeah. You get older; you start having to get more family oriented. You start having hopes for other people rather than for yourself. But I don't have nothin' to complain about. I did it, you know? I did what I wanted to do. And I'm still doing it.

KL: A lot of fans would say that the Band, which was backing you up in the mid-Sixties, was the greatest group you ever had. Would you agree?

BD: Well, there were different things I liked about every band I had. I like the Street Legal band a lot. I thought it was a real tight sound. Usually it's the drummer and the bass player that make the band. The Band had their own sound, that's for sure. When they were playin' behind me, the weren't the Band; they were called Levon and the Hawks. What came out on record as the Band – it was like night and day. Robbie [Robertson] **started playing that real pinched, squeezed guitar sound – he had never played like that before in his life. They could cover songs great. They used to do Motown songs, and that, to me, is when I think of them as being at their best. Even more so than "*King Harvest*" and "*The Weight*" and all of that. When I think of them, I think of them singin' somethin' like "*Baby Don't You Do It*," covering Marvin Gaye and that kind of thing. Those were the golden days of the Band, even more so than when they played behind me.**

KL: What were some of the most memorable shows you guys did together?

BD: Oh, man, I don't know. Just about every single one. Every night was like goin' for broke, like the end of the world.

KL: It's funny, the music business was small back then, primitive. But the music that came out of it was really affecting. Now the business is enormous, yet it seems to have no real effect on anything. What do you think was lost back there along the way?

BD: The *truth* of it all was covered up, buried, under the onslaught of money and that wolfish attitude – exploitation. Now it seems like the thing to do is exploit everything, you know?

KL: A lot of people are happy to be exploited.

BD: Yeah.

KL: They stand in line.

BD: Yeah, exactly.

KL: Have you ever been approached to do a shoe ad or anything?

BD: Oh, yeah! They'd like to use my tunes for different beer companies and perfumes and automobiles. I get approached on all that stuff. But, shit, I didn't write them for that reason. That's never been my scene.

KL: Do you still listen to the artists you started out with?

BD: The stuff that I grew up on never grows old. I was just fortunate enough to get it and understand it at that early age, and it still rings true for me.. I'd still rather listen to Bill and Charlie Monroe than any current record. That's what America's all about to me. I mean, they don't have to make any more new records – there's enough old ones, you know? I went in a record store a couple of weeks ago – I wouldn't know what to buy. There's so many kinds of records out.

KL: And CDs too.

BD: CDs too. I don't know. I've heard CDs. I don't particularly think they sound a whole lot better than a record. Personally, I don't believe in separation of sound, anyway. I like to hear it all blended together.

KL: The Phil Spector approach.

BD: Well, the live approach. The world could use a new Phil Spector record, that's for sure. I'd like to hear him do Prince.

KL: Do you think Prince is talented?

BD: Prince? Yeah, he's a boy wonder.

KL: Lately he's seemed to be a little trapped inside of it all.

BD: Well, there must be a *giant* inside there just raving to get out. I mean, he certainly don't lack talent, that's for sure.

KL: Who are some of the greatest live performers you've ever seen?

BD: I like Charles Aznavour a lot. I saw him in sixty-something at Carnegie Hall, and he just blew my brains out. I went there with somebody who was French, not knowing what I was getting myself into.

Howlin' Wolf, to me, was the greatest live act, because he did not have to move a finger when he performed – if that's what you'd call it, "performing." I don't like people that jump around. When people think about Elvis moving around – he didn't jump around. He moved with *grace*.

KL: Mick Jagger seems to jump around onstage a bit too much, don't you think?

BD: I love Mick Jagger. I mean, I go back a long ways with him, and I always wish him the best. But to see him jumping around like he does – I don't give a shit in what age, from Altamont to RFK Stadium – you don't have to *do* that, man. It's still hipper and cooler to be Ray Charles, sittin' at the piano, not movin' shit. And still getting across, you know? Pushing rhythm and soul across. It's got nothin' to do with jumping around. I mean, what could it possibly have to *do* with jumping around?

KL: Showbiz?

BD: I don't know. Showbiz – well, I don't dig it. I don't go to see someone jump around I hate to see chicks perform. *Hate* it.

KL: Why?

BD: Because they whore themselves. Especially the ones that don't wear anything. They fuckin' whore themselves.

KL: Even someone like Joni Mitchell?

BD: Well, no. but, then, Joni Mitchell is almost like a *man* [laughs]. I mean, I love Joni, too. But Joni's got a strange sense of rhythm that's all her own, and she lives on that timetable... Joni Mitchell is in her own world all by herself, so she has a right to keep any rhythm she wants. She's allowed to tell you what time it is.

KL: Well, what about Chrissie Hynde?

BD: Chrissie Hynde's a rock & roll singer who really should go back and study some country music. She should go deeply into the heart of that stuff and then come back bout. Because Chrissie Hynde is a good rhythm guitar player. That's all you gotta be is a rhythm guitar player and singer, and she writes good, and she's got good thoughts. She knows what's right and wrong.

KL: So you're not saying women shouldn't be performers, are you?

BD: No, absolutely not, man

KL: Do you see any bands of merit on the scene today? What about U2? They're friends of yours, aren't they?

BD: Yeah, U2 will probably be around years from now. John Cougar Mellencamp, he'll be around as long as anybody will be. Sure, there's people. But, you know, as time goes on, it gets just a little more diluted... In many ways, what's happening now in music is very corrupting. Especially European rock & roll – it's so weird. It all comes out of what America did, but it's so far from the early guys, like Little Richard and Chuck Berry. That was so pure, you know? But what's become of it? It's become degraded... Like, I like U2 a lot, but, well, U2 are actually pretty original. But they're Irish; they're Celtic – they've got *that* thing goin'. You've gotta get away from America in order to make anything stick. America will just bombard you with too much shit. You have to make a conscious attempt to stay away from all the garbage. Whereas in the past, I don't remember ever having to make a *conscious* attempt to stay away from anything. You could just walk away, you know? Now, you walk away, it gets you no matter where you are.

KL: Do you think there's any point today in people getting together – the way they did in the Sixties – to try to change things?

BD: Well, people are still strivin' to do good. But they have to overcome the evil impulse. And as long as they're tryin' to do that, things can keep lookin' up. but there's so much evil. It spreads wider and wider, and it causes more and more confusion. In every area. It takes your breath away.

KL: because so many of the things that were scorned in the Sixties, like living you life just to make money, are accepted now?

BD: Yeah. But it isn't really accepted. Maybe in America it is, but that's why America's gonna go down, you know? It's just gonna go *down*. It just can't exist. You can't just keep rippin' things off. Like, there's just a *law* that says you cannot keep rippin' things off.

KL: Have you ever considered moving to another country? Where would you feel more at home?

BD: I'm comfortable wherever people don't remind me of who I am. Anytime somebody reminds me of who I am, that kills it for me. If I wanted to wonder about who I am, I could start dissecting my own stuff. I don't have to go on other people's trips of who *they* think I am. A person doesn't like to feel self-conscious, you know? Now, Little Richard says if you don't want your picture taken, you got no business being a star. And he's right, he's absolutely right. But I don't like my picture being taken by people I don't know.

KL: But you are a star....

BD: Yeah, well, I guess so. But, uh...I feel like I'm a star, but I can shine for who I want to shine for. You know what I mean?

1987
Source not given, reproduced in RTS

Source: *Rolling Telegraph Supplement* #11, p.19

Dylan in sex romp scandal

SINGER Bob Dylan cried out, **"Wow, what a woman,"** while having sex with a Sydney dancer, a court was told in Sydney.

The woman, 41-year-old Gypsy Fire, is suing the Melbourne Truth newspaper for obscene and blasphemous libel over an article published on July 26 last year. The article alleged:

- She had been Dylan's sex slave during his Australian concert tour last year
- She had danced semi-naked before him
- She had massaged his feet believing he was Jesus Christ
- Afterwards she had lit candles and masturbated.

John Sackar, QC, for the Truth, told the Castlereach Street local court that Gypsy Fire had written to publishers Transworld in September offering a manuscript of her experiences. "I positively know that it will be a number one seller, just as I know that I will be with Bob Dylan," Miss Fire wrote.

"Our passionate desire was so wild and oh, so hot and erotic. I threw him down on the bed and rode him as hard as I could," the court heard. "His eyes were amazing as he said **'Wow, what a woman'**. I'll never forget that," Miss Fire said in the witness box.

After they had finished, she had asked him for four tickets to his concert and he had given her seven. Mr Sackar said the dancer's prosecution of the Truth was nothing more than a blatant publicity stunt, and that she was "not displeased" with the publicity.

March 1987
Peter Landecker's story behind the "Dylan: Words & Music" play

Source: *Rolling Telegraph Supplement* #8, pp. 19-26.

WORLD PREMIERE
A Multi-Media Musical

DYLAN:
WORDS&MUSIC

A Play by Peter Landecker based on the Words and Music of Bob Dylan

Musical director: Bob Johnston
Starring: Bob Miles
Produced by John Meal

After I read Tarantula, I became scared. I was supposed to portray this guy and I couldn't even come close to understanding his book. At first the book seems like random, unconnected jumble nonsense. Upon closer study it still seems that way, but I got this unmistakable feeling, there was great, profound meaning that I was somehow missing. I was scared because I knew he wrote the book and he knew exactly what he was doing and I didn't. I was eighteen at the time. He was about 23 when he wrote it. He was everything I could ever possibly dream of achieving and more, considerably more. I didn't have a prayer of portraying this guy and having the portrayal be truly full and accurate. I knew it and I was scared. I had already done a lot of acting in a lot of different plays but I never had portrayed someone who had really existed, a real person. It's much harder to do this than come up with an original character. And Dylan is so present in the public mind. Everyone has some sense of who this guy is. I knew this. People were going to come in and see me as Dylan and compare. Their Dylan to my Dylan. If the two were anywhere near close, than they could forget that I wasn't the real Dylan and then really enjoy the show. So what I was after was getting close to what people perceive him to be.

I worked hard. I spent the most time learning all the lines and trying to make them believable, like they weren't memorized lines. I worked with John, who was directing the play. John had put the show together originally in South Africa and he had portrayed Dylan there. Some friends of his had put together a revue of Dylan music together and he gathered some poetry, monologues, and interviews of Dylan and performed them in between his friends song presentations. Apparently the show went over quite well in South Africa. Now it was a few years later in Santa Barbara, California. I don't know how he ended up there, but it was mostly because he was getting paid by the Santa Barbara Repertory Theatre Company to act in one of their shows. The theatre company was actually part of the Santa Barbara City College. John, being a rather shrewd fellow, saw an opportunity to put together a version of the Dylan show. As a workshop production of Santa Barbara City College, the show would be protected from potential lawsuits from Dylan and the people who own his music and writing.

I chanced upon a xeroxed flyer announcing auditions for an actor to play Dylan and for musicians. At the auditions, John handed me the Writings & Drawings book by Dylan and asked me to read The Ballad of Frankie Lee & Judas Priest. I knew I wanted the part. Actors know when they Want the part. It doesn't mean you're going to get it, but it sure helps. Anyways, I got the part.

I didn't really like working with John. His idea of directing was "Say it like this...". He had done the part and he wanted me to say the lines exactly as he had said them. There's no arguing with the Director. But John was a nice guy. I needed all the help I could get. So I said the lines as he wanted and for the most part, it was a good way to say them.

The show was a success by Santa Barbara standards. And it was a great summer. Most days were spent at the beach, then do the show, and go out and party till early in the morning, sleep till early in the afternoon and start again. I was 19, I was in love, I was happy and I knew it. I suppose everyone has that one summer they'll always look back on. That was mine.

Before I had even auditioned for the Dylan show, my grandparents had invited me to go to Europe with them (My grandfather, a professor, was going to be giving lectures in England & Sweden). This, of course, was an offer I could not refuse. But the show was doing good business and got held over. So I was either going to have to leave the show or not go to Europe. I ended up leaving the show. On my last performance, everyone gave me a surprise party and I got a framed program signed by everyone with the show. John ended up taking over the part, I had a great time in Europe, and the show lasted a few more weeks before closing.

Portraying Bob Dylan had a profound impact on my life. I don't know if I knew it at the time or not. Perhaps the most immediate effect was that I became more confident, maybe even cocky. I think I acquired some of Dylan's intolerance for falsity and pretense. But more importantly, Dylan inspired me. Here was someone who had achieved something that really mattered. He was and still is a tremendously powerful, positive force in this world, and he had done it through writing and performing. Key to all this is that Dylan stays true to his own conscience. **"I never thought of myself as breaking the rules, because I never really acknowledged the rules in the first place"**, he once said. Yet he is someone who can distinguish what really matters and what doesn't.

Returning from Europe, I continued my studies at U.C.L.A. in the theatre arts department. This was a very non-Dylan kind of a thing to do, but it was the right thing for me. Since I was a child, I knew I loved the theatre. I was now learning about all aspects of live stage – acting, directing, lighting, costuming, sets, box office, etc. By the time I was a junior, I could look back on about 40 theatre productions that I had been involved with (mostly as an actor). In retrospect, I considered almost all of them a waste of time. They just didn't have any meaningful impact. Either the material was trivial, or the presentation was amateur, or boring, or confused by some director's wild vision. In any case, I was very frustrated by the ineffectiveness of theatre. The big exception was the Dylan show. It was different.

First of all, the potential audience is big. People who'd never consider going to the theatre would be interested in seeing the Dylan show. If the point is to have impact, then the more people and the more different types of people the better. Also the format of the Dylan show was different. The audience was acknowledged and performed to, like at a concert. So the "pretend" element of theatre is not there. The show was about a lot of things, important issues and messages, but it's not preachy and didactic – like so much political theatre. It's a funny an entertaining show. And the more I learned about Dylan, the more fascinating and important he became. It was around this time, Dylan was putting out his "born again" albums out. At the time it seemed like an incredibly odd thing for him to be doing. Some of the messages on the "Slow Train Coming" album seemed to be in direct conflict with some of the most basic messages Dylan had been associated with from his previous work. An interview from the L.A. Times revealed that Dylan truly had **"a born again experience... there was a presence in the room that couldn't have been anyone but Jesus."** These developments made Dylan even more fascinating, mysterious, and important.

In my third year at U.C.L.A., I put together my own version of a Dylan show. I asked a few of my musician friends to each learn a Dylan song or two. With less than a week of rehearsal, we presented an informal version of the show to about 100 students and faculty. We sat the audience in a semi-circle, about half sitting in chairs and the rest sitting on the floor on pillows and on platforms. The show was a big success. It was intimate and powerful and moving and funny. I applied to some student fund and to my pleasant surprise got a few thousand dollars to put the show on at the Ackerman Grand Ballroom in the student union. We spent most of the money putting together a multi-media show to accompany the music. UCLA let us use their state of the art sound and projection equipment. We seated the audience on the stage (again in a semi-circle) and built our stage as an extension of the existing one. A giant

rear-projection screen was our backdrop. It all worked pretty well. We only did about four shows. The fourth was hastily arranged just to video the show.

A few days later, I got a call from a guy named Joel who had produced and directed and conceived the stage show TOMMY. Joel was all enthusiasm about the Dylan show. He wanted to produce it at The Westwood Playhouse, a midsize Equity house in L.A. We were all quite excited until Joel called a meeting of the entire cast and then didn't show up.

Less than a month after that, I was driving my car on Sunset Blvd. near UCLA and I spotted an interesting looking figure wearing leather boots and a leather jacket on a typically hot L.A. day. He looked a lot like Dylan. He was looking in the window of a Jewish deli, and then crossed the parking lot to return to his car which was being filled with gas at the corner gas station. By the time I approached him he was getting back into his car, a big baby blue station wagon.

"Are you Bob Dylan?"

"Yeah"

It was indeed him. He was uncomfortable and disappointed he'd been recognized. He was nervous and shy.

"I just portrayed you in a play at UCLA..."

"Oh yeah, I heard something about that"

"Look, we were hoping to do a professional version of the show, do you think it's possible to get the rights from you to do that"

"Yeah, I suppose. Talk to Sal Bonafede at Management 3"

I was in shock.

"What's that? Management what? Sal Who?"

Dylan repeated himself and told me he had to get going as he drove off.

It turns out that Management3 is a group that manages performers run by Jerry Weintraub, Sal Bonafede, and someone else. Their clients at the time included Frank Sinatra, Neil Diamond, John Denver, Dylan, and some others. Sal Bonafede used to be one of Elvis Presley's managers.

I called Sal up and told him Dylan had told me to talk to him. We set up a meeting. Joel accompanied me to their office in the heart of Beverly Hills. Management 3 takes up the entire top two floors of the building. The walls are literally covered with gold and platinum records. The furniture is all beautiful antiques. Sal is a big, loud, friendly Italian. I told him about the Santa Barbara and the UCLA shows and the gas station meeting. Sal was responsive, he thought it sounded like a good show. He warned us that he hardly ever spoke to Dylan, yet he would try and see what he could do about getting us the rights.

Six months later, absolutely no progress had been made. Sal had referred us to Dylan's attorney. Joel had an attorney who was calling Dylan's attorney most every day. I was calling as well, but neither of us could get through. He wouldn't speak to us. It seemed like a dead end.

I graduated college. I got involved in other theatre projects, and got some work in TV soap operas.

In the fall of 1983, an amazing thing happened. Driving my car on the Pacific Coast Highway from Malibu towards Santa Monica, I somehow noticed that Bob Dylan had just ridden by me on his bicycle going the opposite direction. I made a quick U-turn and caught up with him as he turned left onto a small residential road by the ocean. I didn't have to ask if it was him this time. I rolled my window down.

"Hi – remember me? from the gas station. I'm Peter Landecker, the guy who wants to do the show about you."

"Yeah, Yeah, I remember. Hey, I'm tired of riding my bike. Why don't you park your car and we'll walk together"

In a second or so, the car was parked and we were walking along this beautiful road on this beautiful sunny day.

I told him of my frustrations in dealing with his people. He assured me it was fine with him for me to do the show, but he said it really wasn't up to him. I didn't understand this. I said, "These people work for you, don't they?"

We talked about the show, which songs are included and why. Dylan asked if **"Idiot Wind"** was in. I said no and asked why he singled out that one. **"It's one of the most theatrical, dramatic ones"**, he said. I told him we used "Hezekiah Jones" in the show, an early, unreleased talking blues. **"Oh No!"**, he said **"that thing should be dead and buried!"**

I asked about the music he was playing in his sets. This was right after he had gone on tour and only played the Gospel oriented music. I was concerned he was forever abandoning his past work. He assured me he was going to continue playing a variety of music from throughout his career. He told me that when you go out on tour, there's a set of selected songs that basically remain the same and in the same order throughout the tour.

We had stopped walking right outside the driveway of Dylan's house in Malibu. I was praying he'd invite me in, but it wasn't to be. Before we parted ways, Dylan assured me he'd tell his attorney to give me the rights to do the show.

As I walked to my car, the reality of what had just occurred sunk in. This second coincidental meeting had been so perfect, I couldn't have dreamed it up any better. I knew there was no stopping me from doing the show now. It was fated.

And sure enough, after some correspondence between myself and Dylan's office and a lot of research and script re-writes, a registered letter arrives from Dylan's attorney: "Bob Dylan has instructed me to give you the rights to do the show. We will give you a proposal within the week." I was very happy. I thought this meant I had the rights. The waiting was over! Yippee!

But no. I won't go into it all, but it was another two years before the Agreement was signed by myself and Dylan. There were legal problems. I had created a property (the Play) completely out of someone else's material (Dylan's words & music). There was really no precedent for this to base a contract, and whenever attorneys are doing something that there's no precedent for, they get very nervous and cautious. Further complications included the fact that Dylan doesn't own a lot of his own songs, nor does he have full control over his own words from magazine and newspaper interviews. I was learning lessons. One important step was to acquire an attorney whom I could afford and yet had as much clout as Dylan's attorney. These things are important if you want to get a phone call returned.

During those years of waiting for attorneys to produce results, I continued work on the script and staged two incognito productions. First, in a church, I did it as a one man show, singing all the songs myself. It worked on that same intimate level as when it was first done at UCLA. Then, still without rights, I got together some musicians and re-staged it at a small theatre in Hollywood. Of all the mini-prepatory productions, this one was the weakest. I had spread myself too thin. The theatre was wrong. The musicians were wrong. The show worked but it wasn't special and if it wasn't special, it wasn't right. As my mother says, "…another fucking learning experience."

The Agreement between myself and Dylan turned out to be 10 pages, single spaced. It gave me exclusive worldwide rights to stage the show. It took a third meeting with Dylan to get him to sign the document that had finally been completed. A friend of mine gave me a tip that Dylan was going to be rehearsing with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers at a soundstage at Universal Studios. This was right before Farm Aid and they'd never played together. I got into the studio lot by saying I had a delivery (which was in a way the truth – I had my script and the unsigned contract that I was going to leave with Dylan). Sure enough, I found myself on this near empty soundstage with Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers playing away. It was The Heartbreakers, me, and about 3 crew members. Dylan hadn't arrived yet. I sat myself on a couch in a corner and sucked it all in.

Dylan arrived and they started playing some of the tunes from *Empire Burlesque* like *Clean Cut Kid*, *Trust Yourself*, and *I Remember You*. Dylan was having a great time. They did *Louie Louie* and Dylan cooked. I so wish I had had a tape recorder. When Dylan was going to start into *Forever Young*, he was having trouble remembering the first lyrics. I looked it up in

my script and gave him the right words *"May God bless and keep you always..."* He looked at me appreciatively and started into the song just he and his acoustic guitar and Benmont Tench playing piano. If it sounds like it was great, take my word for it, it was. After a few more incredible numbers, they took a break. First I spoke with Tom Petty. It was clear Petty was thrilled to be playing with Dylan. I asked how this union came about and he smiled, "It's been a long process." I could relate.

When I spoke to Dylan, he told me he'd sign the Agreement. He said he wasn't going to involve himself in the production but he wished me the best of luck. I told him that was fine, all I really needed was for him to sign the Agreement.

Returning from a vacation in late 1985, I found a letter from my attorney, "I've got. some good news for you", it stated. He had signed it. Persistence and patience had paid off. I was more relieved than anything else. The celebration won't really come until opening night.

Ask any Producer... the hardest part of the job is acquiring rights to the material, and the next job is a close second in difficulty, time consumption, and challenge. Raising money. My first hope was to find a rich Producer who would become my partner and solve the fundraising issue. I met with a number of these kind of potential producers. Everyone agreed, it's a great project but they were all unwilling to commit to the financial stakes of live theatre. At one point, I was in partnership with a big time Hollywood Producer, who was going to raise the money with a few phone calls. He ended up backing out because someone in Dylan's organization said he didn't like one of the Producer's previous projects.

I was getting tired of living in Los Angeles, and I knew it wasn't the right place to open the show. A few exploratory trips to San Francisco convinced me it's the perfect place for this show. I moved to San Francisco in August of 1986 with the rights but still no funding. I contacted a very helpful organization called Bay Area Lawyers For The Arts and through them set up a Limited Partnership offering to raise money. The first money came in from a local businessman whom I still have not met or spoken to. His secretary called me up after I'd sent him a letter, she said she was messengering over a $10,000. check. A nice beginning. I found my Producer, John Neal, through an ad in the local theatre magazine, Callboard.

Completely set now on making this the best production possible, I held a nationwide talent search to find the right person to portray Dylan. The auditions attracted a lot of people and attention from the media. Not surprisingly, New York was where I found the best candidates. From the New York auditions, I found Bob Miles. Bob is a great singer/songwriter/musician in his own right. He looks and sound remarkably like Dylan and has got the heart and soul and talent to do the part justice. Bob Miles and Bob Dylan are friends. Miles house-sat Dylan's house in Woodstock when Dylan went to play at the Isle of Wight Festival. The guy knows the material. I feel very lucky to have found him.

Another great find has been our Musical Director, Bob Johnston. (Another Bob!) Johnston is a legendary record producer. He produced Dylan's great albums *Blonde On Blonde*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, *John Wesley Harding*, *Nashville Skyline*, and a bunch of others. He knows everyone in the music business and everyone loves him. He is a remarkable man, a joy to be around. Johnston is overflowing with enthusiasm for this project. He is putting together the band of musicians and singers, arranging the music, and rehearsing the performers.

It had always bee n a dream of Bob Miles to someday work with Bob Johnston. Miles and myself went to Johnston's home a few weeks back. Johnston lives about two hours outside of San Francisco in the gold mining country. We sat in this room that had once occupied by hundreds of gold miners and had hardly changed in 150 years. Johnston, his family, and a few other friends and myself spent the night listening to Bob Miles perform one after another of his own compositions. Johnston played some of his music as well. This evening cemented the commitment and relationship between us, the three key creative elements of the show. Johnston thinks Miles is a great, major talent and says he's going to record an album with him.

We have an excellent group of designers working on the show. Nancy Lytle and her Mind's Eye Productions are producing an extensive rear and front projection multi-image slide show to complement the musical parts of the show. The Designer of our set is Bo Henry, is

head of one of the best scene shops in the world, having built sets for The Olympics ceremonies, Liberty Weekend, The Democratic Convention, rock tours of the Stones, Dead, Bowie, etc.

We have set the site and the opening date for **DYLAN: WORDS & MUSIC**, A Multi-Media Theatre Concert. The elements are in place. I'm doing everything I can to insure that this project meets it's potential. It's a matter of getting things done, continuing to find the right people, keeping deadlines, and keeping the spirit.

There are a lot of themes to the show, but the key ideas expressed are about being an individual, staying true to one's conscience, taking chances, and following through on ones beliefs and hopes.

DYLAN: WORDS & MUSIC will have it's World Premiere performance on April 24, 1987 at the Zephyr Theatre on the corner of Market & VanNess (25 VanNess). Previews start April 15. For tickets and information call (415)861-6895 or (415)546-9400.

31 March 1987
Phil A. Roddy interview

Source: *Look Back* #15

EXCLUSIVE LOOK BACK INTERVIEW by P. A. Roddy

This was one of those things that happens to other people, not me. I'm assistant manager of a health club in Connecticut. At 9 p.m. on Tuesday, March 31, I received a call from my manager, asking me to do him a favor. He was scheduled for some minor surgery the next day, but he had received a phone call from his boss asking if we could make the facilities available for an unnamed big shot after hours on Wednesday. Since I was scheduled to close Wednesday night, I told him it would be no problem. Nothing in all this struck me as unusual, since we get this type of request about five times a year. Usually, its for some crime figure trying to unwind during a trial. Wednesday was to be different, however.

The club closed at 9:30 p.m. At 10:25, a limousine pulled up, and two men came to the door. As I admitted them, I couldn't believe what I was seeing: Bob Dylan, accompanied by a big black man, obviously a body guard, exploded past me and headed for the locker room.

It was almost too much to absorb. I'd followed Dylan since high school, subscribed to *Look Back*, collected some tapes (not nearly as many as some, judging from the ads in the magazine), and been lucky enough to see shows in the New York area in '74, '75, '78, '81, and '86. I just couldn't figure out how to act. I decided to just leave him alone and try to pretend it was just another customer.

It was obvious from observing him, that this was a man who knew his way around Nautilus equipment. He worked out for a full 40 minutes, shedding his gray sweatshirt about a third of the way through. The muscles I noticed during the show I saw last July were still in evidence, and he really put everything into the repetitions. For a slightly smaller than average guy, and a forty-five year old one at that, he's pretty strong, being at the R level on the leg lift station.

After the Nautilus portion, he swam for twenty minutes in our Olympic sized pool, and then headed for the Jacuzzi. By this time, I'd relaxed enough to approach him. The body guard kept a close eye, and appeared ready to pounce at any false move.

I introduced myself to Dylan as he was about to enter the bubbling water, and to my surprise he was totally relaxed and friendly. I guess an hour-long workout will soften up even the most prickly of people. Even when I told him I was a fan, he didn't tense up or anything. In fact, he seemed grateful for the company.

At this time, emboldened by his warmth, I decided to go all the way and ask him if it would be possible to interview him for a magazine I subscribed to. He agreed without hesitation, but with two conditions: 1) I would have to conduct it in the Jacuzzi with him, and 2) no tape recorder.

I got out of my clothes in about fifteen seconds, grabbed a clipboard with workout sheets (blank on the back) and a ballpoint pen, and plunged in. The following is as close to a verbatim transcript as you can get, thanks to the shorthand lessons I took on a whim in high school (actually, not on a whim. There was a girl taking the class I was doing anything to get close to).

PR: Do you work out often?
BD: ....(inaudible)
PR: Do you mind if I turn down the Jacuzzi a bit? Thanks.

PR: You look pretty accomplished around the club. How often do you work out?

BD: I try for two, three times a week. It gets hard, you know, when you're never in one place very long. I've got a full set-up back in California, and when we're on the road I can provide for it, but on nights like this, I just have some of my people hunt a place up.

PR: Well, I'm glad we could accommodate you.

BD: Yeah, this is a real nice place. Sometimes when I've been on the road, I've just settled for what I could get. Stuff like running early in the morning, chin-ups on tree limbs, just crazy stuff.

PR: So physical fitness isn't something new for you? I thought maybe you were trying to match Springsteen or something.

BD: God, not him again. It's like I can't make a move without someone seeing visions of the Boss. I have Steve Douglas with me in 1977 and everyone gets all excited. Never mind that I've been in love with his playing since those early Duane Eddy recordings. No, it had to be because I was impressed by Springsteen. Don't you think if I'd been that impressed I would have had his sax player, Clarence or whatever... (turns to guard) **Tony, it's Clarence, right?... yeah, Clarence with me on that tour? And now this. I've been trying to keep myself in shape since I went to Durango to make that movie with Sam Peckinpah and had to ride that horse. That taught me I'd better not take my body for granted.**

PR: Well, it never looked to me like you had a weight problem.

BD: It's funny. In high school, I just couldn't get rid of my baby fat. And when I got to New York, way back when it just wasn't a problem, I couldn't afford to eat. Then a little later, I just couldn't eat. I went two years without food, almost. You ever see that movie, *Dont Look Back*?

PR: Yeah, I bought the tape this summer.

BD: Good. (laughs) **You never see me eat in that film, do you? I never ate on that whole tour, not anything that got to my stomach, anyway.** (laughs) **The only time I did eat, I got horribly sick and wound up in the hospital. That was Albert, though. No control of any of his appetites.**

PR: I thought there were other things affecting you at the time.

BD: There were. Now I know everyone thinks I was a walking Dow chemical plant, but what kept me from eating were my teeth. I just couldn't chew, and the less I ate, the worse my teeth got. When I had that motorcycle accident, they did some root canal work for the next year and that took me out of pain I'd been in for two fucking years.

PR: That's amazing, I never knew.

BD: No one did, they just let their imaginations take over and created all kinds of fantasies for themselves.

PR: So, at that time you began to exercise?

BD: Not really, other than walking. I did one thing though. Man, did I eat. You name it. People try and read so much into songs. You know that song, *Country Pie*? That's what it was about. Pie. In fact, for the first time in six years, I began to have a bit of a weight problem. By the time of that Isle of Wight thing, everyone was on my case, my wife, my mother, the papers. So, when we got back home, I got some stuff like trampolines, a bike, and got back to normal real quick.

PR: This is incredible...

BD: Yeah, hard to believe, isn't it? We take our health for granted when we're younger and then have to pay the price when we get older. Now, I wouldn't want anyone to get the wrong idea from this, that I'm so vain I've got to have myself look like I'm twenty or something stupid like that. I just believe you've got to have some control and discipline or you're just asking for trouble. And there's enough trouble as there is.

PR: What about when you went on the road again.

BD: Well, in that tour with the Band, what was that? '73 or '74, I made a half-assed attempt to keep in shape by having a basketball court available. Can you imagine Richard Manuel taking an outside shot? (sighs) **Poor Richard. Anyhow, in the Rolling Thunder**

tour it was just impossible. Traveling the way we did by bus, working on the film. I just fell into bad habits.

PR: So when did you finally get it together for good?

BD: I would say on that world tour in '77. I had to, it was nothing more than self-defense really. And I've stayed true to it up until now.

PR: What are you doing in this area, by the way?

BD: They had some salute to the Gershwins, George and his brother Ira a couple of weeks ago, and they wanted me to look at the tape they'd done for TV, see if I had any problems with it. At least I look in good shape.

PR: So, you going to make a new album, or...

BD: Phil, I've really got to go, I'm getting like a prune. You've got a good place here. Take care of yourself.

And that was that. He threw a robe on and scooted out, obviously dressing in the limo. The only regret I have was I meant to ask him if he still liked chickens as much as before.

(Note:) This interview came in just before deadline from reader Phil Roddy. Phil asked us to make it clear that there is no tape of this interview, but he did send us a photocopy of the shorthand notes he took during his talk with Dylan. The pages are waterspotted and bear a faint trace of chlorine.

21 May 1987
Los Angeles Times magazine,
Dylan's "encomium" on Jerry Weintraub

Source: *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, 21 May 1987; as quoted in *TWM* #1089

First there was Denver and
eventually Frank
Followed by Dorothy Hamill
And as we all know, others came
wanting to deal
He was Man of the Year
The Wiz of the Biz
And accolades too many to count
The dream and the scheme
Turned the bread into cream
Success it continued to mount…

June 1987
Elliott Mintz Interview For *"Vision Shared"*, Malibu, California

Source: Fragments used to narrate *"Vision Shared"* TV & Radio special;
complete transcript in *TWM* No. 1396 (4064). 23Aug98

This goes back to the 1987 BBC Radio 2 Dylan-on-Guthrie interview, which I last mentioned in 3743. I am assured that the following is a transcript of everything that the BBC received from Dylan's people. The circumstances were a little unusual but, as far as I can understand it, the Beeb does not have a full question-and-answer recording of this interview, simply a selection of Dylan's responses with the questions removed:

I heard him on records over at somebody's house, Folkways records. Uh, *Grand Coulee Dam*, *Pastures Of Plenty*, uh, *This Land Is Your Land*, *Gypsy Davy*, *Pretty Boy Floyd*, *Talking Columbia Blues*, *Little Red Wagon*, *How-Di-Do*, *Tom Joad*, uh *Vigilante Man*. Uh, what was different about it? It was very different. His trip was different. His trip was different because it was, he was, uh, I don't really know if I can actually, ya know, it's hard to say. There are so many reasons why he was so different. It's a... you could fill a book on it. Uh, he had a sound first of all. Everybody has a sound. You have to have a sound and he had that. He had a particular sound and, besides that, he said something that seemed to be needed to be said. To go along with his sound. And, uh, that was highly unusual to my ears. Usually, you'd have one or the other, ya know. He said something. He had an attitude. And he always had something to say. He always could find something to say about anything and I liked that. Um, as far as him... his style of music playing, I liked that. I liked the way he played the same. Uh, and I liked the things that he said when he sang. And that, that coupled with the fact that I'd never heard of him before, I mean, so, that set me, that I had a lotta (chuckles)**, a lotta... a lotta lost time to make up. I mean, I really had to find out who this guy was and, ya know, everything I could about him, ya know, which I tried to do at that... when I first heard of him... when I first heard him, not of him. I think I was over at somebody's house, who was a lawyer. He was also a folk singer, yeah. He had Woody Guthrie and Cisco Houston records. Anyway... anyway, to answer your question, I first heard Woody Guthrie on record.. uh.. over at.. er.. a house party. Everybody has their own sound. And that's what grabs you first, is the sound. Um, well, it was a simple.. it was very simple, more or less a Carter Family type sound. I don't think it was too far off of that. I started singing his songs; I started learning his songs. There was a time I did nothing but his songs. I mean, he's written so many, ya know. And I... er..., did a few of his songs, the ones that I knew, that I could find, uh, then I tried to find more. I read his book, I read *Bound For Glory*, which a professor, a folk music professor at the University of Minnesota, loaned to me to read. It was not a book you could, er, that they sold in a bookstore. I was loaned a copy to read it and I read it and I dug it. I thought it... it preceded *On The Road* by quite a few years, actually. I thought *Bound For Glory* was the first *On The Road*. Kerouac's book came out, as I can r... as I recall, I read Kerouac's book in... '59 maybe, 'f course, it changed my life like it changed everyone else's, ya know. Uh, Woody Guthrie's book was published in the late '40s, I believe. Uh, they didn't have paperbacks, I believe, when his was out, and, uh, I really didn't know. I didn't know if he was dead or alive, to tell you the truth. And then I found out, I slowly found out where he was. By that time, I think I'd been... I was completely taken over by him... um... by his spirit or whatever, ya know. And, um, I couldn't believe that I'd never heard of this man. I think, I think, I think that alone was.. Uh, I mean, he had so much to o..** (?)**.. to give, ya know, as, ya know, as ... you could listen to his songs and actually learn how to live. Know what I mean? Or know how to feel. If you weren't sure quite how to feel about a certain something, whatever it may be, if he covered it in his songs, most likely he touched upon a subject, and, ya know, he was a guide. Now, I don't know, I wasn't around when... I went to... When I met him, he was not**

functioning with all his facilities at a 100%, ya know. But the person I saw.. uh.. I was there more as a servant than as somebody there... I mean, I knew all his songs and I went there to sing him his songs. Ya know, that's all I went there to do and that's all I did. There wasn't much to talk with him about. I never really talked too much to him. He couldn't talk anyway. He was very jittery. He always liked the songs and he'd ask for certain ones. (Laughs) **I knew them all. I was like a Woody Guthrie jukebox, ya know. I did, I knew them all, but, ya know, but never in my.., never did I think... I knew that I wasn't really the best at doing Woody Guthrie imitations. I never really was about doing Woody Guthrie imitations. I wanted to... Jack Elliott was the expert at that, ya know, anyway. He came along at a different time, not so much from me but from the generation now. I mean, the generation now, I still remember that time, the generation now, I don't know what they remember, ya know. They remember, they go back maybe as far as David Bowie which, as time goes on, will be saying a lot, too, ya know. Woody was like a... I think he did a whole lot more than he ever knew he did, ya know. I don't know, I mean, Woody Guthrie, though, if he was now, if he were around now, still believing what he was believing, of course he'd be very disillusioned, ya know. Everything happens in its own time, ya know. Woody Guthrie was who he was because he came along at, in the time he came along in. What would he think, I mean, if he knew what was happening with unions nowadays? I don't know. I mean, er, those things were like a dream. Uh... he was like a link in the chain for me, ya know, like I am for other people and like we all are for people. We're all just links in the chain. And, er, there's a certain type of innocence that, um, I never regained again after, uh, maybe, I guess, after he passed away, I don't know. Or, with.. there was an innocence to Woody Guthrie. I know that's what I was looking for, ya know. Um, whether it was real or not or whether it was a dream, who's to say, ya know, but, uh, like a lost innocence or something, ya know. It's hard.. it's just, ya know, it's... after him, it's over, it was over, ya know, it's over.**

Spring or Summer 1987
Comments on Richie Valens, highway near Malibu, California

Taken from a long version of the "La Bamba" trailer available on Home Video cassettes only. (Not DVDs).

BD: **I remember Richie, yeah, I saw him at one of his last shows.**
Q: You did?
BD: **Mm-hmm.**
Q: What did you think about him? Was he any good?
BD: **Was he good? Oh, yeah, he was good, yeah.**
Q: Was this 17-year-old a ??? for you? (uninterlligible)
BD: **For anybody.**

6 August 1987
Tom Petty comments on "Jammin' Me"/"Got My Mind Made Up"

Source: *TWM* #1080

"That was a real collaboration. We did that by saying the lines out loud to each other from the newspaper. It's hard to tell who wrote that because one guy might have started the sentence and another finished it. Bob came out and said **'I got this idea for a song called *Jammin' Me*. Like too much information'.** So we put a pad down and picked up a newspaper and just started coming up with lines. We had a lot of fun doing it, we wrote 8 or 9 verses. I was playing him the album and he liked the riff from one of the songs and said **'Let's take a riff like that and write a song for me'.** So we wrote two songs , one which was on his album *Got My Mind Made Up* and *Jammin' Me*, but he never got round to that one. He only did it once in rehearsal. I took it to Mike Campbell because I thought the words were really good and I didn't think the riff was too much. Mike had some great idea for it, so I asked Bob if I could put it on the album and he said sure".

(*Tom Petty quoted in a UPI news item, quoted in LONDON FREE PRESS)*

24 August 1987
US magazine feature on Elvis' death anniversary

Source: *TWM* 1081

"US" magazine in the States (24 Aug 1987 issue) took the passing of the anniversary of the death of Elvis Presley to ask some celebrities how they felt. Dylan is quoted:

When I first heard Elvis' voice I just knew that I wasn't going to work for anybody; and nobody was going to be my boss. He is the deity supreme of rock & roll religion as it exists in today's form. Hearing him for the first time was like busting out of jail.

I think for a long time that freedom to me was Elvis singing "Blue Moon of Kentucky". I thank God for Elvis.

September 1987
Time Out story by Simon Garfield

Source: *TWM* 1105

A story told by TIME OUT reporter Simon Garfield, partly against himself. He sent a hand-written note to Dylan's room: "Dear Robert, Mr Garfield of TIME OUT magazine in London would be delighted to make your acquaintance". Ten minutes elapse before a reply comes back (Presumably in Robert's own hand): **"As in the cat?"**.

6 September 1987
Robert Hilburn interview for *Los Angeles Times*

Source: *Rolling Telegraph Supplement* #10, pp.19-20

Los Angeles Times
Monday, September 7, 1987

BOB DYLAN'S FIRST ISRAEL CONCERT A HITS MISSED AFFAIR
By ROBERT HILBURN

TEL AVIV—**"I'll be your baby tonight,"** Bob Dylan crooned sweetly near the start Saturday night of what observers here described as the most significant rock concert in this young country's existence.

Anyone, however, who expected Dylan to live up to the obliging sentiments of that teasingly romantic song simply didn't know the acclaimed songwriter's long history of independent action.

The result was another dramatic chapter in Dylan's colorful record of heading one way when his audience was looking for him in the opposite direction.

Rather than tailor the show to songs that resolved the questions here about his politics and religion (a concern of part of the audience), or put all his "hits" into a tidy nostalgia package (the hope of a much larger segment), Dylan stuck pretty much to the assortment of interesting but less familiar numbers that he used on several of his recent U.S. dates with the Grateful Dead.

This meant fans eager for "*Like a Rolling Stone*", "*The Times They Are A-Changin'*" or other Dylan anthems of the '60s had to listen instead—after waiting up to 20 years to see him in person—for songs like "*Joey,*" "*Señor*" and "*I and I.*"

The result was like two trains passing in the night. Dylan on one track singing many of the songs that were generally well-received on the Dead tour (but with considerably less bite at times), and the audience on the other, waiting to celebrate the music that had meant so much to them for so long.

The forces finally got together during the encore. Dylan—backed by Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers plus three female vocalists—offered "*Blowin' in the Wind,*" "*Knockin' on Heaven's Door*" and the evening's big surprise: "*Go Down, Moses,*" a traditional spiritual built around the line, "*Let My People Go,*" one of the most emotional phrases in the Jewish culture.

One song noticeably absent was "*Neighborhood Bully*." The controversial 1983 song about standing up for one's rights, even with force if necessary, was widely interpreted as a defense of Israel. Sample line: *"The neighborhood bully has been driven out of every land / He's wandered the earth an exiled man / Seen his family scattered his people hounded and torn / He's always on trial for just being born."*

"I hadn't even thought of that song," Dylan said Sunday, sitting in his hotel room on the Mediterranean. **"I probably should have but I didn't. It would seem to be an appropriate song. Maybe I'll play it in Germany,"** he added, laughing.

Though many in the audience said they were touched by the inclusion of "*Go Down, Moses,*" it wasn't enough to those interviewed after the concert to erase the disappointment of the evening. Some also felt the inclusion of "*In the Garden,*" one of the songs associated with Dylan's born-again Christian period, sent a mixed signal about his current religious stance.

"People I know have been waiting 10 years for the night Bob Dylan would perform in Israel," said a 24-year-old engineer, standing in the rear of the nearly deserted Hayarkon Park after the concert. "And he doesn't do his hits, the songs that we want to hear. What if this is the only time he plays here?"

Still, most of the three dozen fans questioned before and after the concert saw the night as a historic moment and expressed appreciation that Dylan was one of the first major rock artists to perform here.

The show was the opening date in a six-week Dylan-Petty European tour that also includes a Jerusalem concert tonight. (A second Hayarkon Park show Sunday was canceled because of what the promoter said were technical difficulties in getting the equipment from here to Jerusalem.)

Reviewers for Tel Aviv's four largest newspapers, however, weren't interested in the sociology of Dylan's visit. They looked at the evening in the narrowest of entertainment terms, using such words as boring, monotonous, flat and withdrawn to describe his song selection and/or manner. They also said his voice sounded tired.

Before seeing the reviews, Dylan acknowledged Sunday that his performance had been sluggish. **"I just couldn't get things rolling on stage,"** said the bearded singer, who had traveled here for 12, hours by private bus front. Egypt; so he could see the country.

"Maybe it was just that I was tired... jet lag or something. But it happens some nights when you just feel like you are on a sinking boat. There's nothing you can do about it, but I think things started moving toward the end."

Dylan wasn't so willing to concede a problem in the area of song selection. **"I don't understand this *hits* business,"** he said forcefully.

"I never think about whether a song is a hit. I don't even know what has been a hit some places. We went to France and they asked why I didn't do 'Man Gave Names to All the Animals' [a minor 1979 composition]**, because they said it was No. 1 there. *No 1*. And I didn't even know it was released there."**

"Besides, you can't just stand there and guess what the audience wants to hear. I went to see Frank Sinatra at the Greek Theatre and he didn't do any of the records from the Capitol days. But I still liked seeing him."

On paper, Dylan's first concert ever in Israel promised to be as one-sided as a fixed prizefight. Here was the most acclaimed songwriter of the rock era playing in Israel's largest city, for an audience that strongly identified not only with his socially-conscious music, but with his Jewish roots. Many of those interviewed in the crowd saw the concert as a public gesture of his support for the country.

And, sure enough, the mood of the nearly 35,000 people was eager and adoring before the concert at the outdoor Hayarkon Park—a sprawling park on the outskirts of the. city, with temporary fences erected in the concert area. With a nearly full moon and perfect temperature, it could have been an ideal California night.

Much of the audience, according to a local observer, consisted of Americans who moved here in the early 70s with old Dylan albums in hand as they searched for the idealism outlined in his songs, and young Israelis who now share many of those ideals.

"The thing about the '60s that is so in with young people here is that Israel right now is like the States in the '60s in some ways," said Matan Hermony, 18, as he waited on the park grass Saturday with friends for the concert gates to open.

A recent high school graduate who enters the compulsory Israeli Army soon, Hermony was one of the several young people questioned who drew parallels between Israel's controversial 1982 Lebanon War and the Vietnam War.

"To tell the truth, I am afraid of war.... I don't want to die. My friends and I turn to songs like '*Blowin' in the Wind*' and '*Knockin' on Heaven's Door*' because they are very meaningful to us." When Dylan walked on stage, hundreds of fans lit candles in salute, while a few shot off flares that lit the sky.

Younger members of the crowd pressed toward the stage while older ones stood to the sides and rear, a few hugging loved ones. There were lots of misty eyes during '*Blowin' in the Wind*.' Even if the show didn't live up to all the audience's long-held dreams, it was a night that few here will forget.

On Sunday, Dylan, who avoids explaining his actions or reflecting on others' interpretations of him, shifted uneasily on his chair when asked if people should interpret his visit here in Big Statement terms. Though he expressed warmth for Israel, he said simply that he is willing to play anywhere people want him.

"I'd like to play Egypt," he said. **"You know the Jews and Arabs have the same father. They're brothers. Basically, there shouldn't be a problem between them. They're both Semitic people. If someone is anti-Semitic, they're anti-Arab as much as anti-Jew. The problem is politics."**

"I felt right at home in Egypt. I wasn't surprised because Egypt-land is in all our blood. I didn't go to see the Pyramids. I wanted to see the prison where Joseph was in and the place Abraham took Sarah."

27 November 1987
Dylan quotes from Ron Wood on the David Letterman show

Source: *TWM1143*

Ron Wood and (the wit and wisdom of) Bob Dylan

On 27 November 1987, Ron Wood appeared on the David Letterman show on U.S. television, mainly to promote his new book. This is called RON WOOD: THE WORKS and contains drawings of his famous friends plus his reminiscences. During the programme, he referred to Dylan as "Mr. Zimmerman". In the book and on the programme, he mentions that it was his (that is, Wood's) guitar that Dylan used on his (that is, Dylan's) appearance on the LETTERMAN show, back in March 1983. In the book, he mentions that Dylan was camping out in the grounds of Shangri-La Studios when Eric Clapton was recording NO REASON TO CRY there in early 1976. He talks a little more about their appearance at LIVE AID and one or two other tales.

The following sentence should lift the heart of most readers: "And of course, we've got tons of tracks on tape that may one day see the light of day – things recorded in studios, in basements, hotel rooms".

A couple of stories. Wood mentions that he first met Dylan at a Faces party at The Greenhouse in LA just after he did his first solo album I'VE GOT MY OWN ALBUM TO DO in 1974. Pete Grant introduced himself by saying "Hi, I manage Led Zeppelin" to which Dylan retorted: **"Hey, I don't come to you with *my* problems"**. A couple of years later, at THE LAST WALTZ, Neil Diamond came off stage and said to Dylan, "You'll have to be pretty good to follow me". Dylan came back with: **"What do I have to do, go on stage and fall asleep?"**

19/26 December 1987
New Musical Express U2 interview

Source: *TWN* 1144 excerpt

U2 and Dylan

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS (19/26 Dec 87) managed a few, most interesting Dylan references in a U2 article/interview. It seems that a part documentary/part 'live shoot' film is being made of their USA tour. A soundtrack LP is planned and one of the songs is a "half-finished U2/Dylan collaboration, *Prisoner of Love*". They did it at a soundcheck in Nashville.

The article mentions that they recorded half the album at the Sun Studios in Memphis. And also, in a different section, that their recent studio company has included Dylan and B.B. King (another song is '*When love comes to town*', originally written for B.B. King). It is not clear whether Dylan's studio presence is limited to one half-written collaboration or not, or even whether this included Dylan's recording involvement or not, nor even whether Dylan's presence was at Sun Studios or not. However, you can bet Dylan would really go for the chance to record at Sun.

In the same article, Bono says Dylan is "very hung up on actually being Bob Dylan". As an example, he says that he and Dylan were trading lines and verses off the tops of their heads; Dylan came up with what Bono calls an "absolute classic", but Dylan then said, **"Nah, cancel that"** as he thought they were too close to what's expected of him. And the lines:

> ***I was listenin' to the Neville Brothers, it was a quarter of eight***
> ***I had an appointment with destiny, but I knew she'd come late***
> ***She tricked me, she addicted me, she turned me on my head***
> ***Now I can't sleep with these secrets, that leave me cold and alone in my bed.***

1988
Joe Smith interview for his book, "Off the Record: An Oral History of Popular Music"

Source: *Off the Record: An Oral History of Popular Music*, pp. 163-165.

Bob Dylan

Bob changed the nature of songwriting like no other individual. His impact on what was happening and what was to come is incalculable. And he remains as major a pop star as there ever was.

Little Richard, Carl Perkins, and Jerry Lee Lewis were the people I listened to before I got into folk music. But their scene wasn't happening anymore. It was over. The Kingston Trio and Harry Belafonte stopped having hits in the late-fifties. I heard Leadbelly somewhere and that's what got me into folk music, which was exploding. To me, it seemed like the only thing to do. I had never heard much of it growing up, except the country stuff like Bill Monroe, the Stanley Brothers, and Hank Williams.

New York was the center of activity for folk music, the mecca. Everything was coming out of New York, but I didn't go there as quickly as I could. I managed to get there in a roundabout way. It was all that I ever thought it was supposed to be. It was happening. It was a learning process because there were so many people there who knew more than I did. I picked up on what I could and I worked at it. When I got to New York, there was a small crowd of people my age, but most of the people I met were five to ten years older than I was. As far as I could remember, the scene there stayed that way until the middle-sixties when things started to turn toward more professional-type things.

When I began to record, with the early records, there used to be people in the hallways with songs for me to record. I never used any of them, but I met people who could just sit down at a piano and bang out original songs. I already had my own material, but people were always surprised to find that I was doing only folk songs and my own songs. At that point, I didn't even consider myself a songwriter. Back then I was just carrying on.

All those early songs were first drafts that I never even sang other than when I began to record. Recording was so new to me that when the sessions were scheduled, you had to deliver. You couldn't go into the studio without songs. So whenever my sessions were scheduled to happen, I would just hole up and write songs on the road, or even at the sessions themselves. Today you write a song and think about it and change a few lines. In the old days, you wrote them up in ten minutes and that was it.

I felt passionate about all those songs because I had to sing them. They were written for me to sing, To stand in front of people and sing, I have to care about the songs. As I remember, I cared about all that stuff I wrote about.

I would meet the Top 40 people when I was out on the road, and it was surprising to me that they knew my work. All the club singers who had hit records that I knew of in the late-fifties or early-sixties crossed paths with me, and I knew my work was being perceived out there. To what degree I never knew. I knew my work was appreciated on a pure level, but I didn't know how long these songs would be around. 1 never really could imagine way back then that I'd still be singing the same songs in the eighties.

I wasn't surprised by the reaction I got in 1965 at Newport. Going electric was a natural progression. I had been hanging around with different people, playing different material in small gatherings and at other festivals. Newport got more media attention because it was larger than the other festivals. The way people reacted was nothing I could have prepared for, but by that time I knew pretty much what I was doing onstage.

Anytime there's a change there's a reaction. I'm conscious of criticism. It always bothers you when you think you've been treated unfairly, and I felt I received a lot of unfair criticism from the so-called rock music press. It hurts, but I always managed to get through all that and come out the other side. You get used to it after a while. Music isn't one thing or another. With most good performers you can hear all kinds of music in their music. Most performers who are rock solid you can hear country or gospel in their voices or their instruments. I don't feel that anybody is really bound down by one thing, unless you're George Jones.

People think they know me from my songs. But my repertoire of songs is so wide-ranging that you'd have to be a madman to figure out the characteristics of the person who wrote all those songs. I don't bother much with how people view me. It's hard sometimes to live up to their expectations. I like my audience a lot, and whether it's 50 people or 50, 000 there's immediate feedback on both sides. So I've never really been bothered by preconceived expectations because right there that night the truth always comes out.

Some people want to lock me into the sixties, and that's OK. It's like Paul Kantner of the Airplane said, "If you can remember anything about the sixties, you weren't really there." And that's pretty much correct. I can't imagine people making such a big fuss over the sixties unless things are so dull now that they have to think of some time when things were better. If you think back, it really wasn't that much better. It was tougher in so many ways. I'm not really a nostalgic person so I don't buy into the sixties thing like a lot of people seem to do.

People ask me if it's hard being me. I answer, "To a degree, but it's not any more difficult than being George Michael." You can't really complain about who you are, whoever you are. You just have to make the most of it, and that's all that can be expected of you.

20 January 1988
Rock n' Roll Hall Of Fame Induction, New York City, New York

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 559-560.

Speech given by Bruce Springsteen on January 20, 1988, at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City and Bob Dylan's reply on the occasion of Dylan's induction into the Rock n' Roll Hall Of Fame. Present in the audience were George Harrison, Little Richard, Mick Jagger, Neil Young, Harry Belafonte, Elton John, and over 100 of the greatest names in the history of modern music.

"The first time that I heard Bob Dylan I was in the car with my mother. And we were listening to, I think, maybe WMCA and on came that snare shot that sounded like somebody kicked open a door to your mind... from *Like a Rolling Stone*. And my mother who was, she was no stiff with rock and roll, she liked music, she listened. She sat there for a minute and she looked at me and she said, 'that guy can't sing.' "

"And... but I knew she was wrong, you know. I sat there, I didn't say nothin'. But I knew that I was listening to the toughest voice that I'd ever heard. It was lean and it sounded somehow simultaneously young and adult. And I ran out and I bought the single and I came home, I ran home and I put it on, the 45, and they must have made a mistake in the factory because a Lenny Welch song came on. And the label was wrong. So I ran back and got it, and I came back and I played it. Then I went out and got *Highway 61* and it was all I played for weeks. I looked at the cover with Bob in that satin blue jacket and the Triumph motorcycle shirt. And when I was a kid, Bob's voice, somehow it thrilled and scared me, it made me feel kind of irresponsibly innocent and it still does. It reached down and touched what little worldliness I think a 15-year-old kid in high school in New Jersey had... had in him at the time."

"Dylan, he was a revolutionary. The way that Elvis freed your body, Bob freed your mind. And he showed us that just because the music was innately physical did not mean it was anti-intellect. He had the vision and the talent to expand the pop song until it could contain the whole world. He invented a new way a pop singer could sound. He broke through the limitations of what a recording artist could achieve, and he changed the face of Rock and Roll forever and ever."

"Without Bob, the Beatles wouldn't have made *Sergeant Pepper*, maybe the Beach Boys wouldn't have made *Pet Sound*, the Sex Pistols wouldn't have made *God Save The Queen*, U2 wouldn't have done *Pride in the Name of Love*, Marvin Gaye wouldn't have done *What's Going On?* Grand Master Flash might not have done *The Message*, and The Count Five could not have done *Psychotic Reaction*. And there would never have been a group named The Electric Prunes, that's for sure. But the fact is that to this day, where great rock music is being made, there is the shadow of Bob Dylan over and over, and Bob's own modern work has gone unjustly underappreciated for having to stand in that shadow. If there was a young songwriter... If there was a young guy out there writing a *Sweetheart Like You*, writing the *Empire Burlesque* album, writing *Every Grain Of Sand*, they'd be calling him the new Bob Dylan."

"That's all the nice stuff I wrote to say. About three months ago, I was watching TV and a *Rolling Stone Special* came on, and Bob came on. And he was in a real cranky mood. It seemed like he was kind of bitching and moaning about how his fans don't know him, and nobody knows him, and that they come up to him on the street and kind of treat him like a long lost brother or somethin'. And speaking as a fan, I guess when I was 15 I heard *Like a Rolling Stone*, I heard a guy that, like I've never heard before or since, a guy who had the guts to take on the

whole world and made me feel like I had 'em too. Maybe some people mistook that voice to be saying somehow that you were going to do the job for them, and as we know as we grow older, there isn't anybody out there that can do that job for anybody else."

"So I'm just here tonight to say thanks, to say that I wouldn't be here without you, to say that there isn't a soul in this room that does not owe you their thanks. And to steal a line from one of your songs, whether you like it or not, 'You was the brother that I never had.' "

Bob's reply and acceptance speech went:

"Thanks Bruce That was great. Well, I'd like to thank the Board of Directors on the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame for inducting me. And I want to say hello to Muhammed Ali. I'd like to thank a couple of people who are here tonight who helped me out a great deal coming up – Little Richard, who's sitting over there, I don't think I'd've even started without listening to Little Richard. And Alan Lomax who is over there somewhere too. I spent many nights at his apartment house listening to and meeting all kinds of folk music people which I never would have come in contact with. And I want to thank Mike Love for not mentioning me. And, er... I play a lot of dates every year too. And peace, love and harmony is greatly important indeed, but so is forgiveness, and we've got to have that too. So thanks."

The reference to Mike Love is due to the fact that Love had previously made derogatory comments about other artists.

The Wicked Messenger #1169 gives one more quote from Dylan that appeared in US *Rolling Stone*:

The Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame Revisited Again

The latest issue of ROLLING STONE out in the States, to no one's surprise, has extensive coverage of the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame, complete with colour pix, Dylan appearing in seven of them. There were a number of additional points in the text. While other reports mentioned that Elton John was upset because not all his party could sit at the table, this mix-up was caused by the fact that George Harrison had invited Dylan to join him at that table prior to Elton's arrival. In addition, unlike previous years, there was an attempt to organise the jam beforehand. Paul Shaffer went round asking. Dylan's response was **"Anything you want"**, while Bruce said he would, too, if Dylan did "Like A Rolling Stone". Shaffer stated, "Between me and Bill Graham, we made a tentative list and, in our back pocket, we knew we were going to do 'Like A Rolling Stone'".

May(?) 1988
Gabriel Byrne recollections, Tour rehearsals, New York(?)

Source: *TWM1250*

Quoted in roughly mid-July, actor Gabriel Byrne said this:

“About five weeks ago I was watching Bob Dylan rehearsing in New York for his tour. I’ve always was a huge fan of his, and there we were, Dylan’s girlfriend, his manager, two friends of mine and myself. She said he was in great form and he’d play something for me. He came over and I asked him to play “Clean Cut Kid” and he said **“Yeah, that’s a good Bob Dylan song”**. He always refers to himself in the third person. When he finished, he said **“How’s that for you, Gaybo?”**. I was so in awe that I didn’t even hear him play. Eventually I said that was great. What do you say to Bob?”

June(?) 1988
Backtrack / Catchfire / Do It The Hard Way Cameo Appearance

Source: http://imdb.com/title/tt0096875/

Dylan (BD) plays an eccentric visual artist (uncredited). In his only scene (lasting 50 seconds) he converses with Milo played by Dennis Hopper (DH):

BD: I haven't seen Ann Beth in a long time. Her forms aren't exactly simpatico. Who did you say you were working for?

DH: I work for Bank of America. I need a hundred pieces for lobbies up and down the state here. I really need to talk to Ann!

BD: For banks Ann's stuff ain't any good. Too distracting, too literal. Gets in the way of business as usual. Use something less threatening, more abstract. My friend Laddie Dill, he works in concrete.

DH: Yeah, I used to work in concrete, too, shoes. Art! Huh! Fuckin' artist.

20 July 1988
Edna Gundersen interview for *USA Today*

Source: *USA Today*, 29 July 1988, p. 04.D

BOB DYLAN ROLLS BACK IN CLASSIC STYLE
USA TODAY – McLean, Va.
By Edna Gundersen

With each emergence, Bob Dylan risks nostalgic references to his glorious past, comparisons that sometimes dismiss him as a waning force, in a state of artistic atrophy.

Not so this summer. Dylan is flexing considerable musical muscle in a quietly launched tour that is becoming the sleeper hit of the season. By popular demand, the tour is being extended through late October and may go to Europe.

In some of the best reviews of his career, critics are praising the pop prophet's impassioned performances. Rolling Stone called his show "extraordinary no-frills rock & roll."

"It's wonderful to be appreciated by the press," Dylan says of the media fanfare. **"I've had it both ways and it is definitely better to be looked upon favorably."**

Fans are delighting in his decision to revive the classics. He explains, **"If I played only songs off the latest record, that would be a disregard for all the songs that got me here."**

The tour is generating wide attention, despite an almost unnoticed start June 5 and a dearth of the usual promotional tools: interviews, videos, photo sessions, press conferences.

In a throwback to simpler times, Dylan is letting his raucous roadhouse show do the communicating. He's touring by bus, and after 30 years as traveling troubadour, he still finds the grind gratifying.

"I've never minded touring," he says in his first comments to the press this year. **"Touring is part of playing. Anybody can sit in the studio and make records, but that's unrealistic and they can't possibly be a meaningful performer. You have to do it night after night to understand what it's all about.**

"I've always loved to travel and play my songs, meet new people and see different places. I love to roll into town in the early morning and walk the deserted streets before anybody gets up. Love to see the sun come up over the highway.

"Then, of course, there's playing on the stage in front of live people, feeling hearts and minds moving. Everybody don't get to do that. Touring to me has never been any kind of hardship. It's a privilege."

His current show is unusual on several fronts:

- Dylan is reaching deep into his catalog, performing chestnuts like *Maggie's Farm*, *Just Like a Woman* and *Blowin' in the Wind*, as well as obscurities like *Boots of Spanish Leather*, *Absolutely Sweet Marie* and *Joey*. Many haven't been performed in more than a decade. Some are radically rearranged. It's an interesting nod to history from an embattled artist who has struggled to shed the icon mantle.

- In an era when rock concerts are increasingly formal and tightly scripted, Dylan modifies the set list nightly. He and the band rehearsed about 75 songs from his repertoire of 600 and have yet to duplicate a show.

"Every time he goes on the stage, he's totally unpredictable," says Dylan spokesman Elliot Mintz. "One reason he does it is to keep the show exciting and fresh for himself. And he's aware people enjoy hearing so many of his great songs."

- Most artists tour primarily to peddle their newest records. Dylan is performing only one song, *Silvio*, from his current *Down in the Groove* (Columbia) – a simply arranged, insightful album with cameos by the Grateful Dead, Eric Clapton and Ron Wood.

- Backed by guitarist G.E. Smith (*Saturday Night Live*), drummer Christopher Parker and bassist Kenny Aaronson, Dylan is clearly the front man, not the shadowed figure next to Tom Petty or the Grateful Dead, with whom he's shared stages in recent years.

- The show is amazingly spare, almost anti-show: subtle lighting, modest equipment, no costumes, no lasers, no pyrotechnics. The low-key visuals allow the audience to hone in on Dylan's vengeful vocals and haunting anthems.

Characteristically, Dylan is humble about the hoopla. Reminded of his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame this year, he says, **"Of course it was a great honor to be included, but more important was the recognition of Leadbelly and Woody** (Guthrie)**, seeing them get the respect they deserve."**

5 August 1988
Kathryn Baker Interview, Beverly Hills, California

Sources: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 281-286;
The Stars And Stripes – Wed. September 7, 1988 ("Bob Dylan on Bob Dylan"), p. 17;
The Spectator, 17 September 1988, Hamilton, Ontario, ("Dylan's still on the road and ridin' high").

An interview with Kathryn Baker of *Associated Press* that was syndicated for publication throughout North America. The interview took place at the Italian restaurant Il Cielo in Beverley Hills following Dylan's three nights at the Greek Theater in Holywood on 2-4 August 1988. This article comes from the Columbia periodical *The State* of September 16th 1988. Other sources that have been checked include the *Stars And Stripes* (the U.S. Forces newspaper) of September 7th 1988 which is basically identical in content and the *Hamilton Spectator* of September 17th 1988 which is just a scaled down version with no additional information or quotes. The *Miami News* of 23rd September omits quite a few segments but does contain two new paragraphs on Shakespeare which are presented at the end of this transcript.

HE'S 47 AND STILL GOING STRONG

Beverly Hills, Calif – How many times have the rumors spread through some nightspot –"Bob Dylan's supposed to show up?" This time it's no rumor. Dylan is due here soon for a very rare interview. The site of this event is Il Cielo, a lovely Italian restaurant.

The violin music is soothing but it doesn't block out memories of *Dont Look Back*, the 1967 documentary that included Dylan's razor-tongued evisceration of a hapless magazine reporter, or the more recent snippet in the Rolling Stone 20th anniversary TV special that showed Dylan bitterly complaining about fans who dare to approach him because his songs have touched them. **"That has nothing to do with me"**, he griped.

Dylan doesn't make an entrance, he materializes, slipping in through the back. He is polite, subdued, nervous about doing an interview. After settling in a chair, he checks all around him like a skittish colt suddenly released into an unfamiliar corral. He puts the ubiquitous sunglasses on the table, quietly dismisses mineral water, accepts white wine, asks **"Will it bother you if I smoke?"**. Invited to go ahead, he takes out a packet of Salems. He says he quits occasionally. He sits forward and answers questions earnestly, looking directly at the interviewer with his big blue eyes.

Dylan looks fit at 47, and he isn't slowing down. He's on his third tour in three years, just released *Down In The Groove*, his seventh LP in eight years and is already thinking of another for next year when he also hopes to tour the Soviet Union. He's also planning to launch a movie and TV production company.

He has just completed three high-energy, sell-out performances at Los Angeles Greek Theatre. Since going on the road in June. Dylan is proving that, far from being over the hill, he's at the top of his form.

The tour has drawn critical raves and has been extended at least through Oct. 16-19 when he'll do a four-night stand at New York's Radio City Music Hall, his first performance at the legendary theater.

Backed by a tight, three-piece rock band led by guitarist G. E. Smith of *Saturday Night Live* renown, Dylan has rejuvenated his classic material, resurrecting such gems as *Boots Of Spanish Leather*, *Times They Are A-Changin'* and *Masters Of War*.

"When I'm singin' my songs, it never occurs to me that I wrote them," Dylan says.

"If I didn't have a song like *Masters Of War*, I'd find a song like *Masters Of War* to sing. Same thing with *Times They Are A-Changin'*. If I didn't have a song like that, I'd go out and look around and I'd search around until I found one like that, you know."

There's a line in *Masters Of War* about being afraid to bring children into the world. Dylan, now divorced, has five.

"I don't sing that line," he jokes. **"I love children. I always taught that if you were blessed to have them, you just had more of them. They're protection from the world."**

His eldest daughter just married, suggesting a possible new phase in his life. The rebel voice of the 1960's is after all nearing 50.

"I wouldn't mind being a grandfather, or a great grandfather for that matter," he says, **"but I don't know if that has anything to do with age. I know people in their 30's who are grandparents. I don't know how old I am. I mean, people tell me how old I am, but I have no way of knowing if they're tellin' me the truth or not."**

When his children were young he moved them from New York to Malibu, Calif., to protect them from the effects of fame and **"so they grow up in a little more country environment, at least hear the birds singing."**

"There's just something instinctive that tells me that a man must support his family, no matter what. As it is, I'm doing what I do because I've been given to do it," he says.

"But most of the people who work 9 to 5 have got to support families, and there's a tremendous disregard for that. You don't see much of that being heralded with heroic words and fancy awards. But that's what makes the world either rise or fall, that commitment to family."

The lead song on *Down In The Groove* – the Wilbert Harrison blues song, *Let's Stick Together* – echoes that sentiment. "It might be tough for a while, you might consider the child / Cannot be happy without his mom and his pappy; let's stick together..."

The album surprised some critics because it is mostly covers of other composers songs. There are only two Dylan originals, plus two collaborations with Grateful Dead songwriter Robert Hunter, including the single *Silvio*.

Dylan said he picked the other material because he liked it. *Down In The Groove* establishes Dylan as recording artist with the strength of style to transcend the source of the material.

"There's no rule that claims that anyone must write their own songs," he says. **"And I do. I write a lot of songs. But so what, you know? You could take another song somebody else has written and you can make it yours. I'm not saying I made a definitive version of anything with this last record, but I liked the songs. Every so often you've gotta sing songs that're out there. You just have to, just to keep yourself straight."**

The other reason for the others is inevitable. He didn't have enough material of his own for an album.

"Writing is like such an isolated thing. You're in such an isolated frame of mind," he says. **"You have to get into or be in that place. In the old days, I could get to it real quick. I can't get to it like that no more. It's not that simple."**

"I mean, just being able to shut yourself off for long periods of time, where you're so isolated no one can get to you, mentally or physically, you know? You need to be able to do that in order to come up with that kind of stuff."

"You're always capable of it in your youth and especially if you're an unknown and nobody cares – like if you're an anonymous person. But once that all ends, then you have to create not only what you want to do, but you have to create the environment to do it in, which is double-hard."

"I don't write about things," he says, **"I write from inside of something, and I sing and play the same way. It's never about that 'something', hoping to touch it. It's rather from the inside of it reaching out."**

Dylan said that he does have five or six songs for a new album. And he's part of an incognito group, The Wilburys, that includes George Harrison, Roy Orbison and Tom Petty and has an album coming out later this year.

In the past few years, he's concentrated on touring – with the Grateful Dead, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, now with this pared-down band that has Dylan alone out front most of the time, performing selections from the vast catalog of an almost 30-year career. Nobody would blame him for just putting his feet up for a while.

"I really don't have any place to put my feet up," he laughs. **"Well, we want to play 'cause we want to play... Why tour? It's just that you get accustomed to it over the years. The people themselves will tell you when to stop touring."**

This tour has brought Dylan the critical praise that seems tougher for him to come by than it is for other artists. He seems to be held up to a higher standard because of his own bigger-than-life image, and that irritates him.

"It's irritating. It's real irritating," he says. **"It's not that somebody can't come and not like what you're doing, that's OK. But I've done tours before where people got real personal with their reviews in a real early time when we were on the road, and for some reason all the towns that we were about to play, they'd like to pick these things up. So it was like intentionally telling people to stay away."**

"I don't know. I go through a lot of that, and then even when you're not doing what they say you're doing, people expect to see that. It's like when we were playing after being booed in Newport or something (in 1965 he brought an electric band to the folk festival)**. I mean, for the next six months, people want to see that same show that got booed, and they want to boo to."**

He is interrupted: Does he have a request for the restaurant's violinist? **"Sure,"** he says, **"Love Me Or Leave Me"**.

Dylan's unexpected tastes and perspectives often perplex his public though he insists he is not, as frequently described, "enigmatic".

"I don't know what that word means," he protests.

"I would like to think that I couldn't be categorized. Who wants to be categorized? That happens because of all the stuff I do, not because of who I am or anything. And I don't even know if that's a true fact because that's nothing much to concern me. You can't make it too long on being an enigma."

If his critics can't categorize him they certainly can't accuse him of playing it safe. He seems to depend on literary and spiritual references that keep him constantly searching for new influences.

He stunned the public in 1979 when he came out with the emotional gospel LP *Slow Train Coming*. The lead song, *Gotta Serve Somebody*, won him his only Grammy, an honor he considers **"an accident"**. The album was one of Dylan's strongest ever and went platinum (1 million copies sold).

"Gospel music is about the love of God. And commercial music is about the love of sex," Dylan says.

After following up with *Saved* and *Shot Of Love*, Dylan, who was born Jewish, seemed to drift away from the Jewish message, though themes of redemption tinged *Infidels* and *Empire Burlesque*.

His current religious leanings are the object of speculation. **"Religion has nothing to do with faith,"** is all he'll say publicly on the subject. But another of his gospel songs, *Death Is Not The End*, turned up on *Down In The Groove*.

So did the Tin Pan Alley tune *When Did You Leave Heaven*. And at a recent concert he delighted the crowd by bursting into *I'm In The Mood For Love*.

Last year he appeared on a PBS tribute to George Gershwin. He was surprised when the producers invited him to participate. **"I said, Are you sure? You sure there might not be another Bob Dylan?"**

Dylan has always been intrigued by Gershwin's music, he says, **" 'cause it sounds like sophisticated city stuff, but there's a country, backwood, alley cat element to it that for some reason he was able to capture."**

"There are smells and tastes in these songs for some reason. And I was used to hearing Nina Simone sing a lot of George Gershwin songs a few years back, and they were very close to the folk songs that I was singing."

Folk songs have an honored place in Dylan's current repertoire, a purposeful homage to his roots. He plays the standards *Barbara Allen* and *Golden Vanities* on stage, and included his own arrangement of *Shenandoah* on *Down In The Groove*.

Earlier this year, he was inducted into the Rock n' Roll Hall Of Fame and played *Like A Rolling Stone*, the anthem of the rock generation, at the ceremony. But folk music is in his heart. He contributed a cut to the recent LP honoring Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie. Born Robert Zimmerman in Minnesota – he later legally changed his name – Dylan migrated to New York in part to visit Guthrie in the hospital. He soon became a sensation playing his songs of biting social commentary in Greenwich Village. But he infuriated folk purists when he took up the

electric guitar by the mid 60's. Ironically, Dylan is now in a better position than the purists to champion folk music in the 80's.

"People don't know folk songs anymore," he says **"I mean hardly anybody sings them anymore, and people think that people who play the acoustic guitar and write their own songs are folk singers, but that's not necessarily true. They're writing their own songs but they're not really based on anything. So I thought, well, if I'm going around again, I'm going to sing folk songs, because, first of all, I love 'em, and the lyrics in them are – I mean, they're incredible stories, and that's where I got a lot of my stuff from in the early years – and still do. Folk songs are still better, even though they're not commercial, they're still better than 90 percent of the stuff you hear on the radio."**

From the *Miami Times*:

"Have you ever seen a Shakespeare play? I mean, it's like the English language at it's peak where one line will come out like a stick of dynamite, and you'll be so what-was-that! But then the other stuff is rolling on so fast you can't even think, and then you have to struggle to catch up to where you are in the present. And folk songs are pretty much like the same way."

"Of course, nobody writes like Shakespeare either," he said, **"But you know, it don't matter. Those things can still be performed. They don't have to be written – just like folk songs."**

8 September 1988
Rolling Stone Feature

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1081-1082.

From Rolling Stone, September 8th, 1988 – Feature entitled *The 100 Best Singles of The Last Twenty-Five Years*

LIKE A ROLLING STONE Bob Dylan Columbia May 15th, 1965

"DYLAN WAS A REVOLUTIONARY" Declared Bruce Springsteen when he inducted Bob Dylan into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame last January. "The way that Elvis freed your body Bob freed your mind." *Like a Rolling Stone* the single that brought Bob Dylan into the Top Ten for the first time, must be counted among his most liberating forays.

Dylan, who rose to prominence as a folk singer in the early Sixties, had not yet fully defined his electric sound at the time of the sessions for *Highway 61 Revisited* in 1965. Consequently it was an unlikely combination of players who turned up at CBS Studios in New York City to help record *Like a Rolling Stone*. According to the critic Ed Ward, Dylan's ironclad dictum for the late blues guitarist Michael Bloomfield was **"I don't want any of that B.B. King shit."** Al Kooper, then a session guitarist, was too intimidated by Bloomfield to play guitar. Instead, he begged the producer, Tom Wilson, to let him sit in on organ.

Asked about the song today, Dylan responded with this statement which he asked to be printed as it stands:

> **The song was written on an old upright piano in the key of G-sharp, then later at Columbia Recording Studios transferred to the key of C on the guitar. The chorus part came to me first and I'd sorta hum that over and over: then later figured out that the verses would start low and move on up The first two lines which rhymed "kiddin' you" with "didn't you" just about knocked me out; and later on, when I got to the jugglers and the chrome horse and the princess on the steeple, it all just about got to be too much. I recorded it last on a session after recording a bunch of other songs. We took an acetate of it down to my manager's house on Gramercy Park and different people kept coming and going and we played it on the record player all night. My music publisher just kept listening to it shaking his head saying "Wow man, I just don't believe this". An A&R man from Columbia Records was also there. He kept saying this is gonna be a hit single and couldn't be cut. He was anticipating people at the record label saying it was going to be too long. I think that was a big thing to overcome at that time, the length of the song.**

Indeed, when it hit the airwaves in the summer of 1965, *Like a Rolling Stone* upended every established idea about what a single should be. Against the concision of most Top Forty fare, the song – which ran for more than six minutes – heightened awareness about the limitations of that format and hastened the inception of more progressive FM stations.

Dylan's idiosyncratic singing greatly expanded the range of vocal styles that could be heard on mainstream radio, and the songs lyrics – which attacked pretense and social privilege with vengeful glee – broadened the themes artists could tackle. In the heady days of 1965, it seemed that if a song so ambitious, uncompromising and innovative could be a Top Ten hit, anything

was possible The tough poetic voice of *Like a Rolling Stone* has inspired an incalculable number of equally individualistic voices to rise up and join it over the past twenty-three years.

7 November 1988
Donny Lalonde vs. Sugar Ray Leonard fight, Las Vegas, NV

Source: *The Ring* March 1989 issue, as quoted in *RTS* #16, p.9.

WHO HIT DONNY LALONDE?

Dylan's friendship with boxer Donny Lalonde has already been observed – as indeed was a be-shaded Dylan on the video of the Lalonde–Sugar Ray Leonard championship fight. However in the March 1989 issue of '*The Ring*', the US's premiere fight magazine, there's an account of Dylan's appearance at the fight by Phil Woolever. Woolever reports that Dylan "sat restlessly, staring ahead" throughout he fight. Pretty strange behaviour! It seems Bob was in Lalonde's dressing room before the fight and some of his "acoustic classics" were used to psych the fighter up. "Dylan looked like someone you could talk about the fights with. It was a correct impression" Woolever reports. **"I'm not a fight fan, I just like to watch guys I know fight,"** said Bob. However "Dylan's eyes came to life as he spoke of long jabs to the body, crashing right hands.." When Golden Boy Lalonde was finally knocked over, Bob was naturally disappointed. **"I thought it was sad,"** he confessed, **"I thought Donny was gonna go a little longer, ya know?**

9 February 1989
Rolling Stone featurette on Stevie Wonder

Source: *RTS* #16, p.9.

GENIUS IS A TERRIBLE WORD

The February 9 issue of *Rolling Stone* (The Hall Of Fame issue) had an extensive quote from Bob Dylan, speaking the praises of inductee Stevie Wonder: **"If anybody can be called a genius, he can be. I think it has something to do with his ear, not being able to see or whatever. I go back with him to about the early '60s, when he was playing at the Apollo with all that Motown stuff. If nothing else, he played the harmonica incredible, I mean truly incredible. Never knew what to think of him really until he cut *Blowin' In The Wind*. That really blew my mind, and I figured I'd better pay attention. I was glad when he did that Rolling Stones tour, cuz it opened up his scene to a whole new crowd of people, which I'm sure has stuck with him over the years. I love everything he does. It's hard not to. He can do gut-bucket funky stuff really country and then turn around and do modern-progressive whatever you call it. In fact, he might have invented that. he is a great mimic, can imitate everybody, doesn't take himself seriously and is a true roadhouse musician all the way, with classical overtones, and he does it all with drama and style. I'd like to hear him play with an orchestra. He should probably have his own orchestra."**

June 1989
El Diario Vasco Interview, Los Angeles, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 743-744.

The following interview, conducted by an unknown individual, took place in Los Angeles just before Dylan flew to Europe and was reported as being between recording and preparing his next film. It appeared in the Spanish periodical 'El Diario Vasco' on June 18 1989. The text might not seem typical Dylanese, but note that this was translated from English into Spanish and later back to English again, clearly losing some of Bob's "eloquence" along the way. However, eloquently translated by Inaki Aguirrezebal.

BOB DYLAN: «LLEVO MUCHOS ANOS A FLOTE; POR ALGO SERA»

Dylan arrived in San Sebastian in the early morning and hid away in the hotel until the hour of the concert, registered as Donald Pump.

DV: What is the film about?

BD: It's the most exciting plan I've been involved in. The film is more than a film starring Bob Dylan. Being sincere on it's own is not enough. You are mistaken, if you are not sincere with your heart you have failed. But I cannot say what it's about until we start to shoot. The film is going to signify a lot. If you could say what, you direct it! But I can't tell you, the same as I can't explain my songs. It's a sense of reality that I assume and the majority of people who listen to me are going to understand. It will work on a level of reality where we can meet me and my work. There are things which can't be explained.

DV: Bob Dylan is known for his weakness for women. Why?

BD: I think the majority of women are beautiful. Many of them seem as if they have come out of a picture. They are vulnerable and also strong.

DV: You said in an interview a few years ago "Goddesses are not real".

BD: A beautiful woman is like a goddess. She is on a pedestal.

DV: During the filming of *Renaldo & Clara* you improvised a lot with his character and Joan Baez contributed to the bedroom scenes.

BD: Joan knew me very well in and out of bed so we were able to make the scenes realistic and entertaining for the audience.

DV: Do you think you've reached the top?

BD: How many years have I been afloat? Many. There must be some reason for it.

DV: Elvis Presley?

BD: A relic from the past.

DV: Frank Sinatra?

BD: He is on the way to becoming a relic. When that happens to me I'll retire.

DV: Bob Dylan?

BD: I will carry on traveling up the road.

DV: Until when?

BD: It depends on several things, like the public, my dreams and how much strength I have left. (Smiling, he said) **Why, I'm like any other person, just about managing to stay afloat.**

AT THE CROSSROADS:
IN RELATION TO HIS CURRENT ATTITUDE ON THE WOMAN FRONT BOB IS NOT TOO SPECIFIC

BD: I am at a kind of crossroads in my life which I am able to endure. I can feel the attraction but also I can manage to distance myself. I admire beauty more than anything but now I don't feel I must possess it. The ideal man or woman does not exist. When you sing to someone you don't actually sing to a man or a woman. You sing to someone to arouse something in them which is buried and once this person has found it you begin to relate and you want to continue doing it, and then you stay with that person. But two people who are in love are not just the property of one another. There's a third element intermingled and this third element is an ideal. They owe it to one another to love the same ideal and this is what they ought to share. If this doesn't exist, it's not love. That's important.

DV: Is it true that during your bad periods when everything seems to be a waste of time, you prefer to be with animals or spend more time with your children because they are more straightforward and less confusing?

BD: The worst time of my life was when I tried to find something in the past. Like when I went back to New York for the second time. I didn't know what to do. Everything had changed. I also tried to sing and write at the same time which sometimes drove me mad. To write is one thing and to sing is something completely different. One opposes the other and I can't write with the energy with which I perform and I can't perform with the same energy with which I write.

DV: Lots of times you've said that you have had to fight. Against what?

BD: With the past. When I conjure up a picture from the past it's almost something masochistic. I've had splendid moments that I want to save. I have been in the darkness... now I want to concentrate solely on the light.

21 September 1989
Edna Gundersen interview for *USA Today*

Source: *Rolling Telegraph Supplement*, no 19, by Clinton Heylin, pp. 26-28.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1989 USA TODAY
Dylan on 'Mercy,' for the record
By Edna Gundersen
USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES — Bob Dylan's new album, *Oh Mercy* (Columbia), is being hailed by critics as his best in years.

And what does Bob Dylan say? The 10 songs were among the easiest he's written.

"Most of them are stream-of-consciousness songs," he says, **"the kind that come to you in the middle of the night, when you just want to go back to bed."**

"The harder you try to do something, the more it evades you. These weren't like that."

Like Prince, Dylan is unpredictable and not given to explaining career moves or work habits. Rare clues are hungrily gobbled by fans and peers. He recently detailed the making of *Oh Mercy*, poised to sweep critics' year-end lists.

Last year's *Down in the Groove* included six cover songs. This time, Dylan chose to use only originals, partly to appease his label. *Oh Mercy* is the first record on a new contract, **"so it's good to have your own songs, at least on the first one,"** he says with a laugh.

He also felt compelled to recommit himself to songwriting and recording.

"Some people quit making records," he says. **"They just don't care about it anymore. As long as they have their live stage show together, they don't need records. It was getting to that point for me. It was either come up with a bunch of songs that were original and pay attention to them or get some other real good songwriters to write me some songs. I couldn't find any other songs."**

At the urging of U2 singer Bono, Dylan teamed with producer Daniel Lanois (U2, Peter Gabriel) who in turn enlisted New Orleans musicians.

"Bono had heard a few of those songs and suggested that Daniel could really record them right," Dylan says. **"Daniel came to see me when we were playing in New, Orleans last year and... we hit it off. He had an understanding of what my music was all about."**

"It's very hard to find a producer that can play," Dylan says. **"A lot of them can't even engineer. They've just got a big title and know how to spend a lot of money. It was thrilling to run into Daniel because he's a competent musician and he knows how to record with modern facilities. For me, that was lacking in the past."**

"He managed to get my stage voice, something other people working with me never were quite able to achieve."

Generally, Dylan finds studios confining and artificial. Unlike colleagues of his stature, he is ill at ease with huge, budgets and long stints in **"factory-oriented"** studios.

"The meter's running all the time," he says. **"The cost is unrealistic. I mean, you could put up a wing of a hospital!"**

Last spring in Lanois' New Orleans studio, **"Daniel just allowed the record to take place any old time, day or night"** Dylan says. **"You didn't have to walk through secretaries, pin-ball machines and managers and hangers-on in the lobby and parking lots and elevators and arctic temperatures."**

Dylan also embraced Lanois' counsel, granting carte blanche in shaping the brooding atmospherics. Typically, producers cowed by Dylan's brilliance keep hands-off, which may account for untailored results in the past Dylan prefers a take-charge, producer, **"someone who knows my music inside out saying, 'You could do better than that you could surpass that.' "**

"Me being me is just one person," he says. **"You need help to make a record, In all the decisions that go into making a record. People expect me to bring in a Bob Dylan song, sing it and then they record it. Other people don't work that way. There's more feedback."**

Interview and review, 1D

He's still painting his masterpiece
By Edna Gundersen
USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES — Bob Dylan, whose biting lyrics and cogent nasal vocals revolutionized rock, finds himself tongue-tied meeting the press.

"These things usually make me clam up," admits the 48-year-old singer/songwriter shortly after arriving at a hotel suite for a rare interview. **"You feel you're supposed to deliver some kind of great profound statement. You can't push people to respond to you. They either do or they don't."**

Most do. Dylan, a musical chameleon, reluctant icon and willful nonconformist, has commanded attention since his first album was released in 1962. Less visible on charts in the '80s, he remains one of rock's most prolific and influential figures, steadily performing, recording and defying expectations.

Oh Mercy, out this week, is the 35th LP in his staggering catalog. *Rolling Stone*, *Time*, *Musician*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* have weighed in with raves. Critics also are applauding his trio-backed tour, which began in June and continues indefinitely.

Dylan and George Harrison are discussing a follow-up to last year's extraordinary Traveling Wilburys collaboration with Tom Petty, Jeff Lynne and the late Roy Orbison. Dylan, who lives in Malibu, is looking into film production opportunities and is stockpiling songs for his next LP. Clearly, the archetype of folk/rock is eyeing the '90s. The embodiment of '60s counterculture Is fed up with nostalgia.

"From '66 on, I was trying to raise a family and that was contrary to the whole epidemic of the '60s," says the divorced father of five. **"Most people were running away from home and trying to get away from their parents. That was never intentional on my part, trying to run away from anything. My family was more important to me than any kind of generational '60s thing. Still is. To find some meaning in the '60s for me is real far-fetched."**

During 2½ hours, Dylan sips coffee, smokes six Marlboros and resists invitations to reveal personal details. Cagey, guarded and fidgety, he's also affable, polite and self-deprecating, speaking in a throaty drawl and sometimes wondering aloud if he's saying anything interesting.

He wears jeans worn at the knees, snakeskin cowboy boots, a turquoise sweatshirt and a black leather jacket he never removes. Tousled brown curls and a sparse beard frame a face set with penetrating blue eyes. Now and then, an engaging boyish smile melts his grim concentration.

A quarter-century ago, his *Like a Rolling Stone* and *Positively 4th Street* were high on the charts. Bobby Zimmerman of Hibbing, Minn., had become, literally, a folk hero. Not fond of reminiscing, he is hard-pressed to nail down highlights: a tent concert with ex-lover Joan Baez, maybe a 1978 show in England.

"It's not a good habit to think, 'This was such a great show,' because you've got to play another one the next night. Maybe it was great, but so what? It's over."

Dylan's early gems — *Maggie's Farm*, *Subterranean Homesick Blues*, *Mr. Tambourine Man* — are classic rock radio staples and the backbone of his shows. Does the focus on his initial work suggest he's painted his masterpiece?

"An easy way out would be to say, 'Yeah, it's all behind me, that's it and there's no more.' But you want to say there might be a small chance that something up there will surpass whatever you did."

"Everybody works in the shadow of what they've previously done. But you have to overcome that."

Since arriving in the limelight with an arsenal of brilliant songs, Dylan has been dogged by his myth—enigma, guru, protest prophet in defense, he became a master of masquerades, protecting his privacy behind smokescreens. Now he shrugs at mention of his image.

"It's been years since I've read anything about myself. (People) **can think what they want and let me be. You can't let the fame get in the way of your calling."**

"Everybody is entitled to lead a private life. Then again, God watches everybody, so there's nothing really private, there's nothing we can hide. As long as you're exposing everything to the power that created you, people can't uncover too much."

Biographies and articles that speculate on his musical motives or love life are **"not even worth responding to,"** Dylan says. **"All that's important is who really knows you, who really cares for you. There's only a few people in your life you care to have know everything about you. It's not important to set the record straight It's more important to keep myself together and be able to function."**

Dylan stoked curiosity and controversy from the start. He shocked folk purists by going electric at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. And the Jewish-born singer's conversion to Christianity in the late 1970s and subsequent trilogy of Christian-themed albums baffled all. The press labeled Dylan "born-again." His Dylanesque response now: **"If that's what was laid on me, there must have been a reason for it."**

"Whatever label is put on you, the purpose of it is to limit your accessibility to people. There had been so many labels laid on me in the past that it didn't matter anymore at that point What more could they say?"

As for the content of those three LPs and subsequent releases, Dylan says, **"You'd never hear me saying that stuff is religious one way or the other. To me, it isn't. It's just based on my experience in daily matters, what you run up against and how you respond to things."**

"People who work for big companies, that's their religion. That's not a word that has any holiness to it."

Often declared pop's greatest living songwriter, Dylan considers himself a singer first **"My reason for getting into songwriting was having something to sing. My songs aren't written for great singers. They're written for me."**

He jots ideas and lyric fragments in a notebook, and pares songs to skeletal simplicity. **"I make it as small or as narrow as possible rather than make it a big, broad, grand thing. By keeping it so narrow, emotion plays a great part."**

And he writes with performing, not recording, in mind. **"The song is going to live or die"** on stage, he says. **"On record, it's deceiving. You hear it in privacy, so it creates its own world when it plays itself for you. But when you see that person doing it live, you can tell if it's real or somebody up there wasting your time or faking it. Faking it is real popular."**

Though his set list changes radically, Dylan's signature *Like a Rolling Stone* crops up almost nightly. He's never tired of it. **"I always play as if nobody out there has ever heard of me. If you don't do that, you get too complacent and you can't read a crowd. You start assuming too many things."**

Dylan assumes audiences want to hear his songs, not his speeches, so he seldom utters a syllable, reasoning, **"It just doesn't seem relevant anymore. It's not stand-up comedy or a stage play. Also, it breaks my concentration to have to think of things to say or to respond to the crowd. The songs themselves do the talking. My songs do, anyway."**

Once mercurial and acid-tongued, he says time tempered his nature.

"I feel like I've gotten a lot more tolerant of everything." Dylan says, laughing self-consciously. **"I don't ascend and descend as much—mood swings and what have you. I'm trying to stay away from anything that even has an air of getting under my skin."**

21 October 1989
Adrian Deevoy Interview, Narragansett, Rhode Island

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, 1083-1090.

This interview was conducted in Dylan's hotel room in Narragansett, Rhode Island on October 21st 1989. Dylan had performed the day before in Poughkeepsie, New York and was to perform the following day at the University of Rhode Island. This was published in Issue 39 of *Q* Magazine (December 1989). Adrian Deevoy, staff writer for *Q* had been led quite a song and dance to obtain this interview and the first half of his article provides background details (these have been omitted here, but do make interesting reading)

Apparently, Kramer offered Deevoy advice on how to "discuss the best way to talk to Bob."

- Don't treat it like an interview. It has to be a conversation. Bob will clam up or wander off if you fire a volley of questions at him. Try not, in fact, to ask any question.
- Do not treat him like a God. It wigs him out.
- Don't ask who *Mr. Jones* is or the motorcycle crash, any of that corny Dylanologist stuff.
- Don't pretend you know about anything you don't. He'll see through you straight away.
- Don't attempt to get the ultimate Dylan interview. Do not attempt to delve into his soul. He finds it insulting.
- Don't ask what specific lyrics mean.
- Don't dredge up old out-of-context quotes. He won't answer you.
- Don't use notes. Bob feels it inhibits the conversation. And finally, if you must use a tape recorder try not to make a big deal about it. He may not feel like having his voice recorded.

And now for the essential part of the article.

We arrive at the seaside chalet where Dylan is staying in Narragansett just in time to see his tour bus pulling away into the sunset. For the first time yet, Kramer panics and instructs the driver to "follow that bus" and pull out in front of it in a manly Miami Vice-like maneuver. Amid much dust and screeching of brakes the bus is stopped and its doors opened to reveal one shaken driver but no Dylan. "We got him!" whoops Kramer. "He's in his room."

The room is low-ceilinged, wooden and so cramped Dylan would have to step outside to change his mind. Mercifully he does neither. The double bed almost touches the four walls. You observe that it has been subjected to some recent blanket-rumpling action. Outside, the ocean sighs. There is no telephone. A girl of handsome Scandinavian aspect sits silently in one corner, flaxen curtains of hair covering her eyes. A rhinoceros in a dog-suit – whose name is sometimes only known to Dylan and sometimes Late For Dinner – is curled up on the floor, casting a wary eye at the visitors, shifting occasionally because it is lying on a Wellington boot.

The Wellington – shiny and black with a red toe cap – contains, as does its fellow boot, Bob Dylan's leg. The legs are positioned maybe a foot from a vast, flickering TV screen. Dylan stares at the unfocused set seemingly engrossed in a program in which a fat lady is explaining the no-nonsense way to make a giant Swiss roll.

Then he looks up, smiles like a sleepy child and rises a trifle unsteadily to greet us. He is wearing a brace of anoraks – one waterproof and black, one hooded and leather. The sea-spray on the latter, the tousled tresses blown flat by the breeze and the exhausted dog, now asleep, suggest an energetic stroll along the beach earlier this evening. The small stain on the pale pastel sweat shirt alludes unfortunately to the recent ingestion of baked beans. His jeans, in the

autumn of their life, are instantly familiar to any Dylan trouser-enthusiast worth his salt as those worn on the '75 Rolling Thunder tour. The narrow cheeks are unevenly thatched with sparse beard, his eyes are laughing and electrically blue. He is, dare one say it these days, quite beautiful. You can't help but notice also that his very famous nose – hooked and noble – is running.

He exudes a saintly dignity that fills this admittedly tiny room and possibly quite a bit of the adjoining bathroom. Whatever charisma is, you are swiftly made aware, Bob Dylan has it king size, on ice, deluxe, by appointment, club class, squared, plus VAT, with fries to go.

So what do you say to this legend? How can you impress upon him that your intentions are honorable, that you are on his side, that you deeply respect his immeasurable contribution to popular music, poetry, culture, the arts, your life? Crikey! Here goes.

How the devil are you?

Will he storm out? Will he rasp, "What do you mean '*devil*'?" and launch into a terrifying verbal assault? Will he mutter darkly about one-legged kings on a savior's chocolate moped? Funnily enough, he does none of these. Instead, he laughs, a coarse staccato giggle – heh, heh, heh and extends a warm, remarkably soft right hand boasting a yellow inch-long thumb nail.

Then he speaks. **"Yeah."** he says, **"very good."** And he laughs again, revealing, if anything, a slight nervousness. The charming soft "r" sound – "*vewry*" – that launched a thousand speech impediments in the '60s isn't nearly as prominent in his speaking voice. Although it's reassuring to note later that, he does pronounce "bury" so that it rhymes with "marry" and actually talks in the strangely italicised manner you hear on his records, invariably choosing to emphasise the wrong word in the sentence.

BD: You gotta sit here on the bed with me, (he says innocently.) **We'll talk here.**

He smoothes the eiderdown and pats the space next to him. The girl perches on a pillow at the head of the bed. Kramer lies behind us. Dylan puts his hand on the tape recorder. **"See what you need to do with this,"** he offers moving closer, **"is this."** He wedges the machine between our hips. **"That should be OK there."** By now he is virtually on my lap. He smells musty yet sweet, like a baby who smokes 20 a day. It's a ludicrous situation and not a little fresh for a first date.

AD: It's very good to meet you at last.
BD: Thank you, (he says politely and bursts out laughing.) **Heh, heh, heh...**
AD: Tell me about the live thing. The last tour has gone virtually straight into this one.
BD: Oh, (he begins establishing brief, cautious eye contact.) **it's all the same tour. The Never Ending Tour...**
AD: What's the motivation to do that?
BD: Well, (his eyes move back to the giant Swiss roll [now ready for the oven]), **it works out better for me that way. You can pick and choose better when you're just out there all the time and your show is already set up. You know, you just don't have to start it up and end it. It's better just to keep it out there with breaks, you know, with extended breaks.**
AD: Does that lend itself to reassessing stuff. The songs are being constantly reinterpreted almost.
BD: Like which one? (he asks quickly.) **Like what? People do say that. To me it's never different. To me... there's never any change.**
AD: The live show is quite improvisational.

BD: It can be, (he smirks.) **Some nights more than others! Heh, heh. Some nights it's very structured. Some nights it just sticks right to the script and other nights it'll skip.**

AD: What makes it take off?

BD: It's hard to say. It's hard to say. It's the crowd that changes the songs.

AD: You stopped playing the harmonica for a while recently...

BD: Uh... yeah, (he looks confused.) **When was that? Oh yeah. Sometimes I do, yeah. Those are the things that get set up and it's hard to bury them. Once there's no harmonicas on the stage you don't play them. Then there's always some problem with harmonicas.**

AD: Like picking up the wrong one...

BD: That can be very unfortunate when that happens, (he frowns.) **You've probably seen that happen a few times. Heh heh heh. Very unfortunate. You can be playing an entire harmonica solo and not be able to hear it and you'll be in the wrong key. You can usually tell by the faces in the crowd, you look and see if it's in the right key. If it's in the wrong key it's, Aauugh!** (He puts his hands over his ears and grimaces.) **Then you can make an adjustment to it. Heh heh heh.**

AD: What about your piano playing? (His technique has been likened to a man constructing a treehouse).

BD: My piano playing is very, very elementary, (he shrugs.) **It's either keyboard or guitar orientated. My stuff isn't too keyboard orientated but it can be. Can be. My tonality is very simple. It's very... uh... three chord stuff. It's not like Elton John where he can modulate within the same phrase or the same bar. That sort of stuff. It depends what you can hear in your head.**

AD: What about your voice? Are you pleased with the way it's sounding at the moment?

BD: Mmmmm... (he smiles inscrutably.) **Ah, that's a thing that's very hard to really pin down. You know, whether you want it that way or not. Trying to adjust the moods of the different songs can be tricky sometimes.**

AD: Do you ever feel limited by it? (Dylan is warming to the subject now.)

BD: Yeah. Sure. My voice is very limiting. Vocally it's just good enough for me. It's good for my songs. It really is good for my songs. My type of songs.

AD: You can't imagine Pavarotti singing one of your songs?

BD: It wouldn't suit that kind of material in a big way, (he deadpans).

AD: What was your relationship with Lanois like?

BD: Very good.

He has now settled into a pattern of unnervingly regular eye-contact. The Swiss roll is consigned to history.

My feeling and my hope is that we could work again together... because... he made it very painless.

AD: Has it often been a painful experience?

BD: You usually work with people who don't, with me anyway... you fall into working with people who for one reason or another happen to be there but don't have a great understanding of what it is that you're trying to do. They might know your name and they might know some of the songs but they don't really have a great understanding and the heart to be able to get under it and push it up and make something out of it. They'd rather say, Well show it to me and let's record it and let me think what else I can put on it.

AD: Did you discuss the lyrics with him? Would he ask what certain sections were about? Would he need to know that to help create an atmosphere?

BD: Ah.

He pauses, fishes in his anorak pocket and lights his only Marlboro of the interview.

We didn't really do that. Some songs might have had more lyrics than necessary and he might have said which verse to keep, maybe whole verses. Generally there weren't too many problems in the lyrics. It was more... in fact there wasn't any problems with them at all.

AD: They're very pared down. Were you particularly strict in the editing? There's no excess.

BD: Daniel's real good at that, (he says evasively, propelling a column of smoke floorwards.)

AD: Is that something you don't have the natural discipline to do yourself?

BD: No. It's something which gets overlooked, (he grins, apparently enjoying the cat and mouse game.)

AD: Prior to making an album are you constantly jotting ideas down, absorbing atmosphere examining things?

BD: Yeah, those songs on that last album were songs which had come to me during that last year and they were pretty much as you hear them on the record. There were some changes but not with the idea of the song picture.

AD: Do you ever write something and think, 'No that hasn't captured what I was trying to say?' That doesn't get across the emotion I was trying to convey?

He sits silently for a moment and then almost shouts, **"Do what?"** Kramer had mentioned this device – he'll pretend he hasn't heard personal questions.

AD: Once again. After writing something do you ever think, 'That's not what I really feel?'

BD: Eh? (He pauses smiling.) **Oh, all the time. Yeah, it happens all the time. You don't what it is you're saying anyway and uh... when you start, ah, filling in, the result might be something you'd never even thought about. And uh, you uh, it's usually easier to settle for that rather than to go back and find out why it's not what you wanted it to be to begin with.**

AD: But do you? Do you delve back into it?

BD: Sometimes you need to.

AD: Can it be a painful thing? There's a couple of raw-nerve things on *Oh Mercy*.

BD: Well... only if there's a record deadline... heh, heh, heh.

AD: Do you never think, I can't write about this. It's too sensitive at the moment?

BD: Eh?

AD: Is subject matter ever too delicate at the time or are you ever too tender to write about a situation?

BD: Ah. (He stubs out his cigarette and strokes his beard pensively.) **No.**

AD: You plunge in?

BD: Yeah, you usually plunge in from something... there's a hole there to begin with. And uh, without that there's no place to go. Rather than sit around and try to concoct something. It's usually just in there.

AD: Is it easier to write when you're miserable? Is writing when you're happy more difficult than when you're unhappy?

BD: Well, you try to do neither really. You really don't want to ah... as strange as it might sound... it's just as easy to write from a miserable point of view on something where you're projecting a great deal of contentment and in the same way it's as easy to write from a great deal of contentment about something that you're projecting a lot of misery into. The way you do it, that's a different thing. What style you use. What vocabulary and all the... verbal gymnastics that make up a song or a poem or anything.

AD: Some of the *Oh Mercy* songs have a sermon-like feel to them.

BD: Well, if they do, that must be, (he laughs silently.) **If the shoe fits, you know...**

AD: Whilst on the other hand some have a very confessional feel...

BD: Well maybe.

He reaches down to tickle the dog who is snoring at his feet.

It's possible...

AD: On some you're hectoring and on others you're opening your heart...

BD: Sure. Sure.

AD: Was that something that was apparent at the time?

BD: No not really.

He raises his voice slightly above the increasingly loud and alarmingly human-sounding dog-snores.

When the songs were put together that's the way they came out.

AD: Does anyone intervene where the lyrics are concerned or is that solely your area?

BD: No-one has ever said to me, 'Change that lyric. Make it more this way or that way.' I mean, that might be an unfortunate thing that no one has ever done that, heh, heh, heh. Sometimes you wish somebody would!

AD: Have you made your lyrics consciously less cryptic?

BD: Well, uh, no. You see these songs weren't consciously anything. They were mostly just streams-of-consciousness stuff.

AD: But is being cryptic in your writing something you've veered away from? Songs like *Changing Of The Guard* on *Street Legal.*

BD: Yeah. Maybe. Maybe. We used to do that song *Changing Of The Guard* quite a few times, quite a bit a few years ago. And the more we did it, the less cryptic it became.

AD: How do you mean?

BD: Doing it night after night, it becomes a lot less cryptic to the person singing it.

AD: What? Less cryptic to you?

BD: To me, yeah.

AD: It's a very dream-like song.

He nods vigorously.

BD: Yeah, yeah... (Then reconsiders.) **It could have used some editing a song like that.**

AD: Do your different bands re-interpret songs? Not just musically, do they introduce new elements to you?

BD: You know, (he says leaning forward) ***It Ain't Me Babe* was on the radio the other day and it never really occurred to me how different it was as a hit to how it was in my repertoire.**

AD: Are there some that are "of their time" that you wouldn't perform now?

BD: No. Not really. Because none of my song are what you call "top singles". Singles get dated. You hear a lot of groups, there's a lot of groups going around and they fall into an Oldies type bag, right? A nostalgia trip. Well, that's because all these people have had hit singles...

AD: Which you've always cleverly avoided.

BD: Heh! Cleverly avoided! That's a nonsense, isn't it? Who wants to cleverly avoid hit singles? Everybody'd like 'em. But it's just not been my lot to have them.

AD: You never know, *Everything's Broken* might be a hit.

BD: You know *Times They Are A-Changin'* was a hit in Britain (he nods)**. It was a Top 10 Hit. Here it wasn't but there it was and so** (*Everything Is Broken*) **could be a hit. It'd be good. It certainly deserves to be.**

AD: If you say so yourself.

BD: Yeah, (he giggles) **I do!**

AD: There's a good "buzz" about Bob Dylan in Britain at the moment. It's like 1965 again.

BD: Well '61 was my first year in Britain. Yeah, '61.

AD: You played in the Pindar Of Wakefield...

BD: Is that a club?

He starts clicking his vast thumb nail excitedly.

Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger had a club and one night Martin Carthy brought me down there to play. At that time there was all those ballads and the only place you could get them was like Southern Mountain kinda ballads but they'd be one step removed from the real old time ballads that were from the old country. There were a bunch of people that helped me out with that stuff in the very early '60s: Martin Carthy, Bob Davenport... just a lot of folk singer type people who ran into me. It was before... well The Marquee Club was happening then. Who was playing there then? Alex? Alex

Korner. Alexis Korner. That was happening. Blues. A lot of my early stuff was taken from all the stuff that those guys taught me then.

AD: Are you one of the great white blues singers?

BD: Probably not... if that's a category. Who wants to be called that? Jimmie Rodgers was that, if anything. People call him a white blues singer.

AD: Do you still feel most at home with the blues?

BD: Well only because the structure is so simple and you can say what you want to say in such an immediate kinda way. Just the two lines and the one line. And the form is rather attractive because it's so simple.

A cork pops. The dog wakes up and stretches out to a quite startling proportion; Dylan pats its head and it settles again. The girl brings over two plastic beakers of champagne. Dylan sets his aside and doesn't look at it again.

AD: Do you remember playing Blackbushe?

BD: Yeah! (the nail starts clicking again) **That was a big show. Who was on that?**

AD: Eric Clapton, Joan Armatrading, Graham Parker.

BD: Graham Parkerl That was a good show. A lot of people. That was very memorable.

AD: In your top hat.

BD: Oh the hat. (He winces).

AD: Can you remember your feelings when you went over to Britain in '65 and '66?

BD: Mm, (he screws up his face in concentration.) **'65? Naw. Not much. It's pretty much blocked out of my mind. Blotted out. I don't know. What was happening on that tour... Donovan! Donovan was happening. What else?**

AD: Have you watched *Dont Look Back*?

BD: Oh many years ago. It's very hard for me to look at anything that has to do with me.

AD: Have you seen *Eat The Document*? (an unreleased, much bootlegged film shot by D.A. Pennebaker on Dylan's '66 European tour, widely regarded as his most "psychedelic" period.)

BD: A couple of times, yeah.

AD: Do you remember at one point you're being ferried around London with John Lennon after a serious night's indulgence, Pennebaker's filming and you're about to be sick?

BD: Oh... (he chuckles)**. In the back of a cab? Very sick, I was. It was an enjoyable ride but a very sick one! Bumpy. Very bumpy!**

AD: Do you recall the exhilaration of the time?

BD: No, (he says dismissively.) **My memory really doesn't focus too well on cab rides.**

AD: No, not the cab ride, the whole period?

BD: Oh that particular time, (he laughs apologetically.) **No, they went by rather quickly. But it was an exciting time.**

AD: You still sing a lot of songs from that time.

BD: My songs hold up for me.

AD: Do you find, when you sing them now, that you realise things you didn't realise at the time?

BD: (The nail goes again) **Oh sure. You never... It's difficult to grasp the whole picture at any given time. You're always thinking of something you should have said or... something you should have done.**

AD: You've actually rewritten songs. You revised *Tangled Up In Blue*.

BD: It did get re-written on the tour where Mick Taylor (1984) **was playing the guitar.**

AD: Why was that?

BD: Ah, I can't remember... (This seems to be the truth) **Er... because the original lyrics weren't fair to me because they just didn't feel right at the time.**

Then something happens. Appearing both amused and deeply baffled he looks up and says,

BD: Hey, whatever happened to Max Jones?
AD: Mr Max Jones?
BD: Yeah, Mr Max Jones.
He enthuses apparently laying to rest one of rock's great unanswered riddles.
He was a journalist... wrote about jazz for the *Melody Maker* way back. I used to see him, then it stopped. Whatever did happen to him? Mr Max Jones...
AD: Could *Oh Mercy* be described as a bleak record?
BD: It could but then again it needn't be. A lot of that might have to do with the different textures of instrumentation on it rather than the songs themselves.
AD: Whose idea were the crickets on *Man In The Long Black Coat*?
BD: It wasn't my idea! (Everyone in the room, even the girl, laughs) **If they work...**
AD: Has it become increasingly difficult to write? Or are you still as prolific as hell?
BD: Oh no. Not at all. You know, the odd song will come to me every now and then and there'll be some kind of responsibility on my part to, you know, make it work, take it down. But a lot of my ideas don't even get developed anymore.
AD: Why is that?
BD: Daily life just sort of knocks 'em out of the way.
AD: It's not as simple as it was when you were young?
BD: Not really, no. When you're younger you got nothing else to do but just write.
AD: Do you strive to change that?
BD: Well, such is life, you know? You can't worry about it. You can't say... in no kind of way are you ever gonna to hear me say that there wasn't any chance for me to write enough songs.
AD: Have there ever been blocks? Times when you've thought, 'I need to write but can't.'
BD: Maybe sometimes in the past but no more. There's too many more important things in life other than the need to write. Especially when you get on a little bit the need to write becomes less fulfilling. Things replace it and also there's the simple fact that you've written so much anyway. If you don't have it by now... My songs are to be done live. This last record here came out of nowhere really. There certainly wasn't any plan on my part to make any statement.
AD: Where will it all lead? Apart from The Tour With No End, what's left?
BD: Well you're always on a tour with no end... As long as the people are there. It's the people who decide when you should pack it in.
AD: Do you enjoy life on the road? It's very divorced from the real world.
BD: You've got to get used to it, you know?
AD: But it isn't like real life.
BD: In some ways it is and in some ways it isn't. It's nice to go back home every night and see the fireplace and bed, food on the table and things that you recognise around you.
AD: But you haven't done that for some time...
BD: No. But you never can tell. It could be around any corner.
AD: You seem always to have been *"on the road, heading for another joint,"* moving on from situation to situation, relationship to relationship. Has severing connections become easier or is it always difficult?
BD: Moving around isn't really... (he searches unsuccessfully for a word)... **it's not like it's that difficult. You can hold up connections. Connections will hold up if they're strong and meant to be held up. If they're not they won't.**
AD: That's a suitably profound note to end on.
BD: Yeah, it is.

He smiles broadly and touches my arm signalling the end of this interview.

As the light begins to fade, the man Van Morrison calls this world's greatest living poet squints myopically out towards the cold, grey sea. He rubs his face, more than likely contemplating something too complex for mere mortals to ever comprehend. Then he sniffs, pulls out a crumpled tissue and blows his very famous nose.

30 January 1990
Commandeur dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres à Bob Dylan
Le Ministère de la culture, le Salon des Maréchaux, Paris, France

Sources: *The Telegraph* #36 ("They call him The Commander"; Summer 1990, pp. 44-54), *TWM* #1676.

Okay, merci beaucoup de tout mon coeur pour l'honneur que vous me faites et me touche énormément. Mille fois merci. A thousand thank you's.

[Thank you very much, with all my heart, for the honour that you are doing to me and which touches me deeply. Thank you a thousand times.]

27 June 1990
The "Surprise" Interview, Reykjavik, Iceland

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, p. 1091.

At a private party after the show in Reykjavik the above conversation between Dylan and the guy who pumped up Dylan's bicycle took place. Obtained through the Internet from Olof Björner.

How do you like Iceland?
BD: Disgusting!

How do you like the Icelanders?
BD: Wow, man!

How do you like the Laugaurdshalle? [pronounced in Icelandic]
BD: Is there something wrong with you?

How do you like Esja Hotel?
BD: An Eskimo joint!!

How do you like the Leif Ericson airport?
BD: Tell me another one?

Icelandic food?
BD: I don't like whales!

What about the Icelandic girls?
BD: Haven't noticed any!

How do you like the air I gave you?
BD: Oh! It's you!! Thank you very much!!! What kind of air pump do you use?

31 August 1990
Edna Gundersen Interview, Lincoln, Nebraska

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1093-1095.

An interview with Edna Gundersen for *USA Today*. This took place on August 31, 1990 in Lincoln, Nebraska on the day of the concert at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. The article that appeared in the European edition of *USA Today* was in a considerably abbreviated form.

ROCK ICON IS HAPPY WITH HIS PLACE
The poetic revolutionary reflects on his charmed life in an exclusive

Lincoln, Neb. – On the opening day of the interview Nebraska State Fair, Bob Dylan is the star attraction, performing in a rocking 90 minutes of mostly early hits. Most of the Devaney Sports Center's 6,000 cheering fans are college students who weren't yet born when rock's poetic revolutionary held a generation rapt with the show's climax, *Like A Rolling Stone*. It's been 30 years since he left college himself to stake a claim in the Greenwich Village folk scene. How does it feel?

"In some ways, it felt older to be 30 than to be 60 or however old they say I am," Dylan says after the show.
"How old am I now?" He's 49. **"That's what they say, but nobody knows my real birth date,"** he counters teasingly.
His take on aging: **"You just can't help it."**

Dylan whose new *Under The Red Sky* album is out this week, is the only living rocker in *Life's* list of the century's 100 most important Americans. Still godlike to many, he admits he's less hungry these days.

"You reach a certain place and that's sufficient," he says. **"Sometimes there is no higher. How much higher can Michael Jackson go? Or Madonna? You get your territory and you're content with that."**

Friendly and direct, Dylan talks freely about his work – in the present tense, anyway. He steers clear of ancient history (the 1960's), Dylan mythology or anything remotely personal.

"People can learn everything about me through my songs, if they know where to look. They can juxtapose them with certain other songs and draw a clear picture. But why would anyone want to know about me? It's ridiculous."

Informed that his childhood home in Hibbing, Minn., recently sold for $84,000 (twice it's appraised value), Dylan says only, **"Well, they better check the furnace."**

Clad in a crisp white shirt, cap, jeans and heavy black boots, Dylan clutches a cup of coffee backstage. Clearly tired, he's nonetheless witty and enthusiastic, even as he faces a 334-mile bus ride to Hannibal, MO., for the next nights show.

For the third year running, Dylan has surfaced with a tour and album. *Red Sky* is the 36th in a canon dating back to 1962. The Traveling Wilbury's second album – **"a whole lot better than the first,"** he promises – was recorded last spring and is due in October. A tour may follow, if Dylan, George Harrison, Tom Petty and Geoff Lynne can co-ordinate schedules.

"It's not a drain at all," he says of this years frantic pace. **"Billy Idol's got the right idea. It's a charmed life. It beats 9-to-5 now, it did then and it will tomorrow."**

"You gotta stick it out though. That's all there really is at the end of the line in this business. B.B. King and Chuck Berry are still working. Little Richard is as good now as he was then."

Dylanologists debate whether the constantly evolving performer is as good now as when he transformed pop with his nasal singing, literary imagery and folk/rock meld. "He doesn't have a problem living up to his past," says Ian Woodward, British author of *The Wicked Messenger*, the 10-years-old definitive Dylan newsletter. "People's expectations are the problem."

Woodward recently heard Dylan perform a staggering repertoire over six London concerts. "The range he covers is enormous. There's a strain in music that goes back to small-town America, rockabilly, rock n' roll, rhythm and blues, folk and country. He's keeping that strain of music alive. I don't see anyone who could carry that baton."

Yet the most quoted songwriter of our time approaches his work with a journeyman's humble dedication.

"It's just another record," Dylan says of *Red Sky*. **"You can only make the records as good as you can and hope they sell."**

Red Sky's 10 originals are less introspective than the atmospheric confessions of last year's *Oh Mercy*. Dylan's playful, minimalistic lyrics are set to bouncy rock, fleshed out by George Harrison, Elton John and the late Stevie Ray Vaughan.

The title cut, about a boy and a girl "baked in a pie," is a Grimmlike tale **"intentionally broad and short, so you can draw all kinds of conclusions,"** Dylan says. *TV Talkin' Song*, a wry attack on television and false gods, is based on a speech he and rocker Dave Stewart heard in London's Hyde Park.

The lighter fare, like the waggish romp *Wiggle Wiggle*, elicited a lukewarm review from *Rolling Stone*. **"Good reviews don't hurt you, but they don't help either,"** Dylan says dismissively. **"It's better to have a record the critics hate that sells 10 million copies than one the critics love that sells 10."**

Though a prolific recording artist, Dylan considers performing his primary outlet. He complains that Columbia has not adequately pushed his albums. The label told him *Oh Mercy's* title hurt sales because it didn't refer to a specific song.

"They have a point, OK? But it's discouraging when you ask the vice-president of your record company why he hasn't sold more of your records and he says, "Well, the title isn't all that great"." Dylan laughs, **"Everybody gripes about their record company. I'm no exception."**
He is one when it comes to self-promotion. *Red Sky* songs were conspicuously absent in recent shows. (**"They haven't settled in yet."**) Cornering him for a publicity photo is impossible.
"It rubs me the wrong way, a camera," he says, **"It doesn't matter who it is, someone in my own family could be pointing a camera around. It's a frightening feeling. It's not really an instrument that's been elevated to that world of art. It's a machine. Cameras make ghosts out of people."**

He's more at ease discussing music philosophy. **"People say music is intended to elevate the spirit. But you've got a lot of groups and lyrics projecting emptiness and giving you nothing, less than nothing because they're taking up your time."**

"Music," he says, **"should aim for the soul not the groin."**
"It's not difficult to get people throbbing in their guts. That can lead them down an evil path if that's all they're getting. You gotta put something on top of that."

He grins when told that Milli Vanilli declared themselves more talented than Dylan and Paul McCartney. **"Who is Milli Vanilli?"** Dylan asks, truly stumped. Not every chart-climber is an artist, he says. But talk of art strays too close to the taboo topic of Dylan's unwitting sainthood. **"What kind of artistry is equal to the silver glisten on a river or a sunset or lightning in the sky? What kind of man's artistry can compare to the great artistry of creation?"**

On that note, he's heading for the bus. **"I got a lot of miles to go,"** he says. And like most Dylan utterances, something resonates beneath the surface.

20 February 1991
Bob Dylan's Acceptance Speech
The Grammy's 1991, Radio City Music Hall, New York City, NY

Source: *Circulating tape*

You know my daddy didn't leave me too much...
He was a very simple man. But he did tell me one thing, he said, 'Son...'
[Long pause while he stared at the plaque and the audience tittered nervously]
...He said so many things you know...

[Pause]

...but he did say, you know it's possible to become so defiled in this world that even your own mother and father will abandon you. But if that happens, God will always believe in your own ability to mend your own ways.
Thank you.

25 February 1991
Unidentified Interview, Guadalajara, Mexico

Source: *In His Own Words*

Does the album title "Under the Red Sky" refer to the current war in the Middle East?

BD: No, not really. The record was released before the hostilities began. But it's relevant, I'd say. But so are the songs I wrote thirty years ago.

March 1991
Eliot Mintz Interview, Los Angeles, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 745-756.

The interview between Eliot Mintz (EM) and Dylan, which took place in a Los Angeles Hotel, was part of a three hour Westwood One Radio Station special broadcast throughout the US during May 1991. The interview proper reputedly took place during March 1991. The entire broadcast was devoted to the recently released *Bootleg Series* boxed set.

Only the Bob Dylan related segments are included here.

Prior to Elliot Mintz's interview with Dylan, there was a run through of Bob's greatest hits during which Bob makes occasional short comments. These are listed first.

Every show that we've done is on a bootleg record.

My role as an artist would be to stay true to my art. But who says it's art, though? Who calls it art? Not me. My stuff don't hang in museums.

I can't write those songs today, no way. Even the simplest songs, if I look at it that way. I couldn't do that now. I'd be a fool to try.

That song's (*The Times They Are A-Changin'*) **got something because it holds up night after night. You can sing it all the time, you know, and it's always new.**

I mean all my songs can be played electric, either electric or non-electric. I mean, they're just songs.

I had to write what I wanted to sing because what I wanted to sing nobody else was writing.

I wish someone would come along and sing some songs that I could do. I mean, it would be such a burden taken off my shoulders, you know. I mean, it's heavy man.

Someone who's invisible has no secrets to conceal. You see, we're all invisible because the soul is invisible.

All the songs I've wrote are love songs. I don't think I've ever written one song that's not been a love song.

Anybody that expects anything from me is just a... a borderline case, you know. Nobody in any kind of reality is kind of expecting anything from me. I've already given them enough. What do they want from me, you know?

I never know one album to the next what kind of songs I'm gonna be doing. It amazes me that I even continue to make albums.

None of my songs are any good. It's the way that they're formed. Hoagy Carmichael songs are much better than that.

I'll just have to hope that in some kind of way this music that I've always played is a healing kind of music. I mean, if it isn't then I don't want to do it.

Look, look, with me they do all kinds of things. If people don't get an interview – if they can't have an interview, er... God know's why they would want one, but if they can't have one and if they must have one, for instance, then they'll write their own on me. They've done it in the past.

And now for the interview with Elliot Mintz.

A couple of weeks ago on a rainy California night, I sat down with Bob at a Los Angeles hotel where we embarked on an evening of conversation. It began like this.

BD: Right, when you did your first interview with John was it like this?
EM: My first interview?
BD: You did interviews with him all over the world, correct?
EM: All over the world including one...
BD: You could have been in Osaka, Japan, at a hotel.
EM: And I was.
BD: Like this.
EM: And I interviewed him once in this hotel.
BD: In a bungalow?
EM: In a bungalow, yes.
BD: We got it, let's go.
EM: [Dylan is strumming a tune] What are you playing, Bob?
BD: A guitar... This is called a six string guitar.
EM: When you listen to the *Bootleg Collection*, you hear a demo for *Like A Rolling Stone*, not a demo but obviously you're playing it for other musicians in a studio and it's done as a waltz. The first and obvious question, when *Rolling Stone* did a list of the 100 best songs ever written, 100 best rock songs ever written, *Like A Rolling Stone* was way up there. You responded to a questionnaire of theirs where you talked about the song. Is it fair to say that you would consider that one of the best songs, if not the best song, you've ever written?
BD: Oh that's, you know, that's not... to me its not any better or any worse than, you know, any of the other songs I've written in that period. It just happened to be one of the one's that was on the Hit Parade and it's managed to survive because of that.
EM: But you don't have any particular affection for that song beyond the others?
BD: Oh yeah, to me its alive, you know.
EM: In the past 12 or 18 months the highest cultural award in France, The Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame induction, Lifetime Achievement award Grammy.
BD: Yea, but you're not talking about Nobel Peace Prizes, you know. Come on, let's... you know really.

BD: Well no-one really teaches themselves guitar and harmonica you know, you just got to, you know, when you don't know anything, at first like you get a book or something and you learn. What I remember is like learning a couple of chords out of some books and then just going out to watch people, you know, to see.. to see how they're doing it, how they play those chords and where other people are playing you just... You don't really go so much to hear what they're... to hear 'em you just go to see how they're doing what they do, you know, try to get up as close as you can and just see what their fingers are doing and, you know, in that early stage its just more like a learning thing you just... And that, sometimes can take, you know, years, many years, sometimes it takes people many years, sometimes it takes people... to me I kinda picked it up rather quickly but I didn't really play with that much technique. People didn't really take to me because of that, because I didn't really go out of my way to learn all... As much technique as some

other people. So I just kinda blazed my way through all that stuff, you know. I would hear somebody do something, and finally get past a certain point and say well what do you want from that? I mean, you can learn, you know, you might wanna learn the song or the lyrics, or you might wanna see how they're playing, you might wanna pick that up, that style they're playing. I don't know. I mean, I just stayed up day and night and just er, barn-stormed my way through all that stuff. And then I heard Woody Guthrie one time before I got... heard Woody Guthrie then it all came together for me.

BD: The first Woody Guthrie song I heard, I think, was probably called *Pastures Of Plenty*. He used to write a lot of his songs from existing melodies you know, a couple of those other ones... *Grand Coulee Dam*, and they just really impressed me, you know. I mean, they just had a mark of originality about them or the lyrics did.

BD: When I met him he was not functioning with all his facilities at 100 per cent, you know. But the person I saw... I was there more as a servant than as somebody there ... I mean I knew all his songs and I went there to sing him his songs. He always liked the songs and he'd ask for certain ones. I knew them all. I was like a Woody Guthrie jukebox.

BD: He was like a link in the chain for me, you know, like I am for other people, like we all are for people. There's a certain type of innocence that I never regained again. Maybe I guess after he passed on. I don't know, you know. There was an innocence to Woody Guthrie like a lost innocence or something you know. Its hard you know, because after him there was... it was all over, you know, it was over.

BD: [Regarding the Witmark Demos] **You sit there in a room with a guitar or a piano, and there's a tape recorder and then you just er... sing your song, you know into the recorder. In that particular room they had photographs up, they had boxes stacked up at the sides of the wall, some kind of boxes and mimeographed songs like sheets. Up the side in boxes and photographs of people with cigars in their mouth. You know, at parties or just... and formal photographs of people who were like earlier on, earlier, people who started these things.**

EM: Tin Pan Alley.

BD: Tin, yeah, well no, it wasn't that. Tin Pan Alley, wasn't that that Brill building thing at the front? You know, it was in the same neighborhood. It seems like so long ago, don't it?

EM: It was. It was thirty years.

BD: I had to write what I wanted to sing because, what I wanted to sing nobody else was writing.

EM: *Who Killed Davey Moore*. The song on the *Bootleg Collection* is played with a tremendous power, tremendous strength, tremendous indignation and a bit of anger as well. Can you recall the circumstances under which you created that?

BD: No, but it was done at the same time as the *Hattie Carroll* song. Yeah, its like those two songs kinda went together, they were in a group, you know. One got left off the record for some reason, yeah it was, er.... Maybe those songs were done the same week, the same night even, they're both very similar.

EM: They're very similar. Here are two songs where the question was always one of blame.

BD: Blame?!?

EM: Yea, blame. *Hattie Carroll was just a maid in the kitchen*.

BD: Well, well, but to me those songs were never about blame they were more about justice than anything else.

EM: *Subterranean Homesick Blues*; you know that there are an awful lot of people who spend a great deal of time looking for those Bob Dylan lines, just those great lines. Boom, boom, boom, boom.

BD: Like a treasure hunt or something, right.

EM: Like a treasure hunt.

BD: Yeah, like you get a map and go off and find the treasure somewhere.

EM: Or you hear things in your brain and it kinda, you know, goes back and forth.

BD: Exactly, yeah, yeah.

EM: And this particular tune has got a lot of those in 'em. I'm sure it must be very, very boring to you to hear your lines quoted back to you, but for the listeners... Does it by the way? That's an assumption, does it bore you to hear your own lines quoted back to you?

BD: Not really.

EM: "*You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows*" or "*20 years of schooling and they put you on the day shift*". *Subterranean Homesick Blues*, how fast did it come to you? Do you have any recollection of where you were when you wrote that song? How it came down. If it was all done in, you know, like in one sitting. Any recall at all?

BD: Um... No... Something like that, you know, you can't be sure how much of it was made up before hand, how much you made up right on the spot, you know. A lot of it could have been made up right there.

EM: When you say "Right there" do you mean like at the recording studio?

BD: I mean right there, during it.

EM: Do you have any recollection about Subterranean *Homesick Blues*, creating the song, anything come to mind?

BD: No, not really, just maybe the band that was playing the song... The atmosphere where it was done, it was one of those songs that was done. No, you know, it was just thrown out with a bunch of other stuff, you know, it was kicked around.

EM: Do you ever just tire of having to be Dylan, of having to subject yourself to all the stuff that Bob Dylan has to be subjected to.

BD: Well, Bob Dylan doesn't really have to subject himself to anything more than me.

EM: Yes, he does.

BD: You mean like this interview?

EM: Yes, that would be one example.

BD: Alright. Yea, its important to encourage me to do things, if that's the question, yea, yea. Everyone needs some encouragement to do some thing. It's hard for me to start my own motor you know, but outside of that there's not really that much of a problem.

EM: I have a couple of Bob Dylan quotes that I would like to just get your comments on, if anything comes through. First quote "*The closest I ever got to the sound I hear in my mind was on individual bands on the* Blonde On Blonde *album, its that thin, that wild, mercury sound, its metallic, its bright gold with what ever that conjures up, that's my particular sound*" close quote. First of all did you say that?

BD: No, it doesn't sound like anything that would have come out of my mouth.

EM: I was quoting from *Playboy* magazine, the last interview that was done with you.

BD: Well, there you go, they could have just, you know...

EM: So first of all you are not acknowledging that the quote is...

BD: Look, with me they do all kinds of things. If people don't get an interview, if they can't have an interview, God knows why they would want one, but if they can't have one and they must have one, for instance you know, they'll write their own on me, they've done it in the past. That's not a, you know, that's not a crime to do that. So when you say this was attributed to me, you know it maybe or it may not be true.

EM: Well, you're saying its not true. You're saying...

BD: No, no, to me, it's... when you just... you repeat it, you say this to me but... it's ... just because it's got my name on it, to me doesn't mean that it was said by me, it could have

been a misquote, it could have been pieced together. Well, let me take another tack at it, lets say it is exactly what came out of my mouth and there's really no reason to elaborate on it.

EM: Well, the question that was going to build had you said yes, I said that, I was going to say what's intriguing to me is that on the *Bootleg Collection*, we don't hear that sound. The sound that comes off the *Bootleg* is something very fundamental. It is not quote "*a wild, mercury sound, metallic and bright gold*".

BD: Yeah, you know why? Because that sound, that's unobtainable.

On the subject of people covering his songs, Bob Dylan once said –

BD: If a person is writing a song he can usually sing it the way he means it to be sung, you know.

He also said:

BD: Somebody wanted to use a song that I wrote and you know, who can object to that?

BD: It never bothered me. I mean, it would be otherwise, you know, I mean, if somebody sings your song, for any purpose its... makes you feel better than if they didn't touch it at all, you know. Its some kind of reward, you know, for just the time you put in doing it.

EM: *Farewell Angelina* was popularized by Joan Baez, did you like her version of it?

BD: Oh, it was wonderful, init?

EM: How come that at the time you created such a beautiful song did you choose not to record it, choose not to release it?

BD: Well, people have been asking me that for a long time, you can't use them all, you know, there's a limit, you know, you just...

EM: So, you're saying basically there was no specific reason, that there was just no space on the disc for it, that there were other songs that you thought were better.

BD: Well, on something like that you're really asking the wrong person, because at that time nobody had really given me that much control over my records, and what was on and what was off.

EM: So somebody else like a producer, maybe made the choices to what songs...

BD: Yeah. You know, in those days you just went in and you played what ever you had and, you know, you never knew how it was going to be used.

BD: [Referring to Mama You Been On My Mind] **That was one of the California songs, Big Sur songs. There was a batch of them, there was like... Joan Baez could tell you probably more about that than me. She drove me once from the airport to her house and that song might have been written during that trip in the back seat of her car.**

EM: There was one other person who you talked about in interview who you really admired, really loved, really respected, and never met, but just ran into in an elevator once – Johnnie Ray. What was it about Johnnie Ray that touched you that way, that affected you that way?

BD: Do you remember Johnnie Ray?

EM: Very, very well.

BD: Well. Yeah he was, well, he just had a lotta heart didn't he. He was hard of hearing too, you know.

EM: Wore a hearing aid.

BD: Yeah. He was a stylist you know, before there was such a thing. Well, but you could say everybody was a stylist. Except not like him you know, he kinda carried that pathos

thing, you know, that... Didn't he carry that thing kinda far. Just all of a sudden he'd just break down and cry on stage.

EM: He would break down on stage. Seem like he'd cry, cry and cry.

BD: How long's it been since you seen someone break down and cry singing a song... Well in Mexico they do it every night really. You know if you go down to South America you'll see it more often than you will in the States.

EM: And Judy Garland did that, and Edith Piaf did that too, and James Brown I think did that too. And I think Joe Cocker did that once or twice.

BD: Alright. Well that's something to reach for. The perfect teardrop.

BD: My role as an artist would be to stay true to my art.

EM: I presume you would feel you have. If you were to listen to the Bootleg recordings round 1960 – '61 thru today as we record this.

BD: Well. Who says its art though? Who calls it art? Not me.

EM: You don't consider it art?

BD: No. My stuff? No. Why should it be? My stuff don't hang in museums.

EM: What is it?

BD. It's performance. It's like dance. It's like anything else you go to a stage and you see, you know. You see movement on the stage, it's like a play. It's a dance. It's all that stuff that happens on the stage. That's what makes the records you see, it's not the other way round.

BD: You'll do things which you know, certain nights, are just great. You'll know they're great and you get no response, and then you'll go someplace else and you just don t have it that night, you just don't have it for a variety of reasons. You don't have it and you're just kinda going through it and it's always gotta be consistent. You get it to a place where it can be consistent. I mean, that's just the way it's got to be. Get it to a place where it's consistent and it's that level where it stays on. It can get great which is really, you know, triple consistent but I done a thing where I might have had a temperature of 104 or I might have been kicked in the side that day I could hardly stand up. I've done shows where I could hardly stand up, where it's been painful to stand there. That's kinda humiliating in a way, because, you know, there's no way you can be as good as you wanna be, you just know it. Before it even starts you know you're not going to be as good, not only as you wanna be, but as you can be and only one time I've ever wanted to replay a show and that was in Montreal. We played a show in Montreal in 1970 and I had a temperature of 104, couldn't even stand up, and the promoter said "You gotta play this show" and we played the show and I didn't have nothing, nothing and there was a response, you'd think the Pope was there. And I've played other shows where I've had everything happening, just re-wrote the book, nothing, no response.

BD: I'm just thankful I can play on the stage and people will come to see me. I don't want to be on that stage, I mean I got no business being there. You get up, you might not want to be there, it might be the last thing in the world you, wanna do but you must do that you must go there and somehow just kick in. You know it's got to start someplace my shows usually act... I'm usually in no frame of mind before a show, none whatsoever and I have to kick in at someplace along the line. Usually it takes me one or two songs, sometimes it takes me much longer than that. Sometimes it takes me to the encore, if I get an encore.

EM: Any thoughts about the song *Wallflower*?

BD: No. Really it's just a sad song, sad experience, one of those pathetic situations in life, that can be so overwhelming at times.

BD: The songs take you through different trips you see. I mean, you know, what's there to smile about? How you gonna sing *Hard Rain's Gonna Fall* or *Tangled Up In Blue* or *With God On Our Side* or *Mr Tambourine Man* or *Like A Rolling Stone* or, you know, *License To Kill* or *Shot Of Love* or *Poisoned Love*, you know, or any of... How can you sing that with a smile on your face? I mean, it would be kinda hypocritical.

EM: [Regarding *Blood On The Tracks*] An awful lot of people have commented on that album. I mean that one seemed to stick with people for a very very long time and I think you once said somewhere that I saw in my notes that you were surprised about the number of people who were so moved and so impressed and so touched by that album, when they ask this, for the most part the album in many cases expresses such enormous sadness...

BD: Well look, everybody says sadness, everybody says all that stuff like, you know, people write better from rejection than acceptance, you know, like people say you can't write good songs if you're happy, you know. Who wants to think that, you know? Who wants to hear a happy song, you know? A lot of people do.

EM: *Tangled Up In Blue* and *If You See Her Say Hello* from *Blood On The Tracks*, did all those songs represent a specific particular period for you?

BD: Yeah. That was my painting period. That was my excursion into the world of art, you know learning how to paint on canvas. It was almost like 'the medium is the message' type trip, you know, It's like they are paintings those songs or they appeared to be, or they seemed to try to be, or want to be. They have to be songs anyway, so they have to be something, right and they're done in... It's kinda hard to explain, but they're more like a painter would paint a song as to compose it, more than a song-writer would write a song as to write it. It was like those songs were like a burst of... At the time they were like coming forth with like a, just a burst of new insight.

BD: Yeah, painting's cool you know. To see something, to be able to see it with your eye, to get it to your brain, to get it into your hands so you can put it, er... transfer it from out there to over here, enjoy it so to speak.

EM: Painting songs. I never heard that expression.

BD: Painting, yeah. Well, you know, maybe some other people have done it but that's really doing it, that's really doing it. That's like taking a brush you know, and painting those songs onto a canvas. They're all painted, that's what they are you know.

BD: *Foot Of Pride*; that's an outtake.

EM: Does anything come to your mind about composing it?

BD: Yea, no, nothing. Oh, not about composing it. Composing it was alright, it probably had a bunch of extra verses that probably... most likely weren't necessary, they should have been... they should have been combined. But, the reason why it was never used was because the tempo speeded up, but there wasn't any drum machine used on that, the tempo just automatically took off, for some vague and curious reason.

BD: [Regarding *Blind Willie McTell*] **He was just a very smooth operating bluesman. His songs always reminded me of... As trains, but that 's just my hang up, you know, trains. And his vocal style, and his sound seems to fit right in with that lonesome sound. His kinda, you know, Ragtime... kinda thing on a 12 string guitar, so it made everything he did sound, you know, give it a little higher pitch. You know, you could probably call... You could probably call... you could probably say he was the Van Gogh of Blues. You could probably say he was the Van Gogh of the country Blues.**

EM: *When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky*. I mention the title to you, does anything come to your mind about the composition, of about where you were at when you were recording it, when you were composing it?

BD: Composing it, yeah. Um... you know, it was bits and pieces of different places that went into writing that. Lines overheard here and there, you know, strung together over a long

period of time, resulted in that particular piece. Its not that uncommon for someone who writes a song or is known to be a songwriter, to just go somewhere and sit around and just, you know, sit there for a long time and do something where you're going to throw yourself into the atmosphere of overhearing a lot of people talking to people, talking to other people. If you're ever hung up for things to say you can always use that, you know, old trick. It works better sometimes than sitting in a room, staring at the wall and trying to, you know, compose there.

EM: How concerned are you about the legacy you leave behind, I hope you live for another 65-70 years?

BD: Yea, legacy?

EM: How history will remember you, do you ever think about it?

BD: Yeah, legacy, yeah, definitely, sure legacy.

EM: Talk to us about it.

BD: Well, legacy that word is very similar to the word legend, that word which is also very similar to the word legion. Okay, and in the bible that's the devils name.

EM: Legion?

BD: Ah, ah. So when you're asking me about leaving a legacy, there's nothing really that there'd be any great interest, on my part, in leaving because of the nature of the word itself.

EM: Being synonymous with the Devil?

BD: Yeah, to me that's a little to close to... you know.

EM: Different word...

BD: Legacy?

EM: It goes back to legion.

BD: Legion, it's the same word.

EM: Let me find a different...

BD: Legend is the same word. A legend is the same thing, you know. We might be getting all too heavy, you know, for a *Westwood One* show. We're talking about the devil...

EM: Well, its a very heavy network.

BD: Well, they may censor that, you know, but, um...

EM: How would you like people to remember you, a 100 years from now?

BD: If they remember me at all its devilish, because that means that there's been a legacy left, and you don't want to leave a legacy. If you try to attain some type of righteousness in this world you don't want to leave a legacy. A legacy of what, you know? Its all, it's all in the mind anyway.

EM: So, as part of your overall musical contribution, the fact the kind of music that you have made, that's an area that you own. Just nobody else messes with that, that's the Bob Dylan experience. You take no personal pride or satisfaction in the fact that you have to some degree preserved that form of the American musical experience? You just view it as...

BD: Yea, it was mine to do, mine to give, mine to show up at the right time to do, and that's just the way it all happened.

EM: Was this a difficult experience? You have a history of resisting this kind of thing, the interview experience talking about your songs and you've been very...

BD: No, this is enjoyable for me.

EM: It is?

BD: Oh, yea, this has... this has, you know, as long as we're, you know, got a purpose in it, this is okay for me.

EM: Some people upon hearing the past 3 hours that we've shared here together, and in advance I thank you for your time and your honesty with all of this stuff, some of them might have come away saying, gosh, I don't know why he just isn't more proud of what

he's done, what he's written, what he's contributed. You know, I don't understand why he doesn't, you know, just give himself a little pat on the shoulder at the very least.

BD: Pride? No, pride goes before a big downfall, you've heard that, we've all heard that.

EM: Some degree of satisfaction?

BD: No, not unless you were expecting some kind of downfall. No, pride, what is there to be proud about. What is there to be proud about, that we made another record? Is that something to be proud about? Is it something to be proud that you made, you know... built another building? Is it something to be proud, you know, that you built another highway? That you have a new automobile on the road? Is it something to be proud about that you've invented a new fertilizer?

EM: What about having the 30 years, created this enormous body of work that has touched, inspired, influenced so many millions of people all over the world, does somebody not take some degree of a little bit of joy in that?

BD: Not really, not really. You can't do that. There's too many other people that have done far superior things than me, in the same field.

EM: Your overall relationship with the press, the *Bootleg Series* covers a 30 year period, 30 years of public awareness for the most part...

BD: Well, my struggle or strife or whatever with the press isn't necessarily with the press, you know, it might be with like... it's like with certain publications at certain times tend to take liberties with you that... er... don't really seem like the right thing that they should treat ya, you know. Maybe a few of those or sometimes it happens that there's a reporter, maybe there's all kind of performers that don't like a certain type of journalist or reporter a certain one because of, you know... who've burned them, you know, burned them, you know, by either promising something they didn't deliver or having something come out in a way that the person who was involved never was told about it. Something like that, you know like that kinda stuff. People don't like that kinda stuff, they don't mind being interviewed and having, you know, some kind of slant on whatever it is you're doing by whoever's doing it to you. You can just let that, you know, wash off that just rolls away. But the other stuff, in some kinda way, don't and, you know, you don't want to be reminded of them people, you know, but they are specific people, you know, specific that would do something like that. So, no there's no problem with the press for me, its just, you know, it's just liars and hypocritical people and ambitious people that wanna, you know, that step over you, you know, use you to walk on.

EM: [Regarding evangelical songs] Do you ever view those records as being any different to the records that came before them or since them?

BD: Well, yeah, they're all different.

EM: How so?

BD: In many, many ways.

EM: Give me an example.

BD: Well, the content of the songs was much different, had a different vibe, you know...

EM: The vibe could be called spiritual.

BD: Yea, religious, religious vibe.

EM: The song *Every Grain Of Sand* seems to suggest, if one was to listen to it, and especially on the *Bootleg Collection*, that you believe that this is a directed purposeful universe where "*every hair is numbered like every grain of sand*". Am I reading too much into it?

BD: No!

EM: Or is that an honest depiction of how you see the world?

BD: Yea. You can say that.

EM: There are no accidents?

BD: Accidents?

EM: No accidents in the world, that everything that happens, happens because its supposed to happen.

BD: Yea, but that's not what the song says though, the songs talking about coincidences, not accidents.

EM: Coincidences?

BD: Yea, yea. Well, forget about accidents, you know. Accidents can happen, you know, but coincidences, you know, they are bound to happen.

EM: Do you believe, literally that, taking your words again that "*every hair is numbered like every grain of sand*" that someone, some entity, something has put all of this in order for some special...

BD: Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

EM: You do?

BD: Oh yeah, yeah.

EM: This song goes to sometimes to suggest that you, in the song, wrestle with that one a little.

BD: Not really, not really. Just because its got an order and a purpose doesn't mean the way its coming down is written in stone. Everything changes, have to leave room for something to change. I like to give things enough space so I can change when I feel.

BD: None of my songs are that good, its the way they're performed, that's what it is. Hoagie Carmichael songs are much better than mine, so are George Gershwin's and Irvine Berlin, too.

EM: You just said quote "none of my songs are that good anyway" close quote and then you talked about the others.

BD: My songs are simple, you know. They've just got a... they're very simple to do. That doesn't mean they're any better, you know.

EM: You don't believe the statement that you just made that none of your songs are any good? That's not an accurate description.

BD: Hank William's songs are all better than mine.

EM: What makes you so special then? What is this whole... this whole experience thing if its not the songwriting?

BD: It's the performing of that song, you're not going to get nowhere with just a good song, you've got to be able to perform it too.

EM: And you would acknowledge that the way you perform your material is exceptional or unique.

BD: To the material itself, you know, only to that... nothing about me is exceptional.

EM: How has the imposition of success made it more difficult for you. I mean presumably people think, well, his success made it easier for him, made it better for him, made it happier for him, made it more fulfilling, more rewarding for him.

BD: Success! Well it depends, like to the outside world, someone might look at my life and think of it as being a great success, but, you know, maybe from my point of view that wouldn't necessarily be true.

EM: Is it? Do you view yourself as a success?

BD: It's not for me to view myself, that's arrogant, you know. Its arrogant for people to view themselves in any kind of way, its a kinda arrogance, you know. Where's arrogance going to get you, really?

EM: Let me phrase it differently, you've received so many public accolades over the years, and you've received obviously the approval not only of the public but of your peers.

BD: Oh, yes of men and women.

EM: And your peers, people who you respect, musicians who count, who matter...

BD: Very true, that's very true.

EM: Do you view that as some kind of demarcation of success? Does that touch you in a way of saying I guess I did good, I guess I did right, I guess I made some kind of musical

contribution? Or do you say, well, you know, none of that stuff has anything to do with me and I'm really indifferent to it?

BD: Well, you say both things, you know. There's no sense to limit yourself and put yourself in a box to say one thing and to be held account for that, a person can fall in a trap by doing that to himself, you know. There's no reason to be extreme like that, especially if you're dealing with, you know, the limitations of success in America.

EM: Do you feel fulfilled with your work to date?

BD: Well, my work fulfils me, but that's all it has to do, you know. That's not saying a lot.

EM: But it does, you know, in a... the question is you do feel that you're living up to your creative potential?

BD: Well... no... sometimes.

EM: There are, I think, about 11 million people listening to us tonight.

BD: There better be...

EM: There are a lot of people listening to us tonight and I assume that a number of them would have liked to have been in this chair, asking you these questions and I'm sure that I overlooked a couple that they would liked to have asked.

BD: They could be someday.

EM: And I hope next time around it will be one of them. The thing that I would like to ask you; Is there anything that I have not asked you? Is there anything that you'd like to say to them, anything that you'd like to just say to the gang, just an open platform to the people who have been with you now on this odyssey for 30 years, the people who presumably are going to go out and buy this amazing collection of songs. You've been asked all the questions anything you just want to say to them about you or anything. Take the air, take the microphone, talk to them. Any thought you want to communicate to them?

BD: Erm... Well it, it, just, you know... don't forget to look over their shoulder, you know, something might be coming.

EM: Like what, Bob?

BD: Like a train.

28 March 1991
Joe Queenan Interview, Los Angeles, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 939-946.

With Bob at home and Joe Queenan on the other end of a telephone, the interview portion of the following article took place on March 28th 1991. Although intended for the *New York Times*, it found it's way into the more down-market magazine *Spy* (July 1991 issue). See the separate article at the end of this 'interview' for more background to how the session came about and find out why Bob et al. weren't best-pleased at being 'taken for a ride'.

Forever young'?
Sorry, no. Bob Dylan – suddenly 50 years old – has declined into a loopy, very occasionally inspired parody of his once-great self. JOE QUEENAN explains what happened and asks Dylan about his future, "Yeah, well, um well, you know, things could change at any time," Dylan says. Don't count on it.

THE FREE-FALLIN' BOB DYLAN
EXCLUSIVE POLYSYLLABIC

AS A COOL OCTOBER EVENING FALLS ON EISENHOWER HALL at the US Military Academy at West Point, about an hours direct drive north of New York City, the women inside selling calico piglets, cow-shaped oven mitts and pussycat chess sets are looking a bit glum. Of all unlikely things, West Point's Eisenhower Hall has been the site of a crafts fair this day, and it seems to have been a success. The women, though, no doubt hoped that they would make lots of extra sales to the crowd gathering for the performance at the Hall that night – Hal Linden with the Rockettes. For synergistic marketing, you couldn't do much better than to combine calico piglets with Hal Linden belting out the Liza songbook. Unfortunately, Linden and the Rockettes have canceled and the audience that has shown up for the replacement act is not buying.

True, there are hundreds of couples in their forties, and that's a pretty good age group if you're selling cow-shape oven mitts, but these 40 year olds look like college-professor types. Maybe they would go for *antique* cow-shaped oven mitts? There are a few teenagers in freshly laundered tie-dyed T-shirts. As potential customers, the worst are the people who look the way the farmers in these parts did around 1850 – the men with their beards and shapeless hats, the women, a lot fewer of them, with their hair very simple and no make-up and big clunky shoes. Finally, hundreds of cadets have arrived, all dressed in gray. This strange brew of locals requires an explanation. It is simply this: of all unlikely things, the performer this night at Eisenhower Hall at the U. S. Military Academy at West Point is Bob Dylan.

If any institution could be described as a place where none is the number, where black is the color, where the masters of war stick guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children, that institution is West Point. The appearance there of the man who wrote "*The Times They Are A-Changin'*", "*Blowin' in the Wind*", "*With God on Our Side*" and other songs intended to make the Pentagon tremble seems a little incongruous. However, when it is suggested to Barbara Sarff, assistant director for the theater, that Dylan's booking may have culturally anomalous overtones, she replies, Eisenhower Hall is a performing arts center that sponsors a wide range of cultural events in the Hudson Valley region.

And why should a mere publicist at Eisenhower Hall find it curious and ironic that Bob Dylan is playing West Point when Dylan himself, a man who was once widely believed to be divine, does not? Some months later, when I ask him about the West Point show in an interview, Dylan says, **"Uh, the West Point show... was that before New York?"** Reminded that it was indeed before he performed at the Beacon Theater in New York, Dylan responds, **"Oh... okay. That was probably flown in – that show was, uh, just booked in that... because it was in that area."** He ignores a hint that the implications of this appearance are interesting: **"It was a decent show. It – no, it was a great show, wasn't it? There was a large pit there, and they didn't allow people to go across it."** To the question of whether he felt strange playing to a sea of gray-uniformed cadets, Dylan says only, **"Well, every show is different, you know? There wasn't anything unusual about it, except my recollection is that there might have been some problems that particular evening because of the stage setup. My recollection of the show is more in that area instead of the crowd or the facility where the show was happening. They seemed to be an enthusiastic crowd."** Pressed further on whether he saw any incongruity in singing protest songs to this particular audience, Dylan says, **"Do you remember when this show was?"**

Getting an interview with Bob Dylan is only slightly less difficult than persuading Pol Pot to free up some time on his calendar. Requests are submitted in writing and relayed to Dylan by his press agent, Elliot Mintz, who then transmits the message that the request either has been turned down or has "fallen into the category of a nonrejected request." Once a request becomes a nonrejected request, Mintz alerts the potential interviewer to "windows of opportunity" during which Dylan may be in the right mood to chat. In this case the first window of opportunity was expected to open around February 20, six weeks after the original request. But Mintz said Dylan was too overcome by receiving a Lifetime Achievement Grammy award to agree to an interview and instead had retreated first to Mexico then to a "tropical island with no telephones". Mintz eventually said that a brief conversation on Thursday, March 28, was not inconceivable. But he could not promise that Dylan would call this reporter nor could he specify what time of day Dylan would call, if in fact he did call. The most Mintz could do was to say that if Dylan did not call on Thursday, he would never call. Mintz seems to have taken PR lessons from Samuel Beckett. At an unappointed hour on the appointed day Mintz called to say that he was on his way over to Dylan's house to see if Dylan was "up for it." Said Mintz. "If this comes down, it will take place at around 9:30 p.m. If he's not up for it. I'll call to say that he's not". At 10:20, Mintz called to say Dylan was ready to talk.

If we had no other evidence than this haziness about West Point that Dylan has become completely oblivious to his legend and to the world as a whole, we might speculate that these responses were a Dylanesque joke at a reporter's expense, that he was toying with his interviewer as he had done so often and so famously in the sixties. Unfortunately, we have lots of other evidence. The first exhibit might be Dylan's appearance at the Grammy Awards last spring. If any of the tens of millions of people watching had not already realized that Bob Dylan, poet, wit, heartrending vocalist, hipster, scourge had turned into Bob Dylan, somewhat pathetic kook – well, now they knew.

Wearing one of those distinctive hats of his that make him look like a refugee from *Hee Haw*. Dylan first played an incomprehensible Gatling-gun version of "*Masters of War*". Then Dylan bemused his patient listeners with this acceptance speech: **"Well, uh, all right... Yeah... Well, my daddy, he didn't leave me too much; you know, he was a very simple man, and he didn't leave me a lot. But what he told me was this: he said, 'Son', he said, um..."** A long pause. **"He said so many things, you know. But he did say, he said, 'It's possible to become so defiled in this world that your own mother and father will abandon you. And if that happens, God will always believe in your ability to mend your own ways'. Thank you."** Tantalizing; inscrutable, nuts.

Not to Dylan, though. When he is asked about the Grammy performance he sounds downright jolly, taking the whole thing in stride. **"That song may be retired,"** he says. He goes on: **"The flu greeted me that morning in a big way. All my drainpipes were stopped up. Those kinds of things just happen to me the night of... the night I'm going to be on a big TV show and the inside of my head was feeling like the Grand Canyon or something. It was not a good night for me. But the song would have come of probably better if my head had been able to get more or less into it."** Why did he play "*Masters of War*" that evening? **"We just did that one... You know, war going on and all that."**

Dylan's nonchalance has its charm. One can almost admire him for taking this approach to an occasion of such monumental insincerity and commercialism as the Grammys. With a lot of effort, one might even divine some profoundly apt sentiment in his speech. Maybe in a convoluted way one can explain the value of breaking one of his classics into shards – if you want non-perfect renditions of oldies, that's what the Beach Boys are for. Maybe one could look at it this way. But nothing can excuse the hat.

BOB DYLAN TURNED 50 ON MAY 24, 1991 (**"WELL. TO ME IT'S JUST ANOTHER BIRTHDAY"**, he says), and it seems clear that the second 25 years of his life have been less kind to him than the first. He is still capable of writing stunning songs – like the one for his current video – "*Series of Dreams*" – and it might be too much to ask of anyone to stay brilliant and pure while those around him, ourselves included, sink into dullness and compromise, but his degeneration has been painful to witness.

In 1966, Dylan suddenly withdrew from the public and spent eight quiet years mostly in Woodstock, New York – not so far from West Point, as a matter of fact. He claimed to have injured himself badly in a motorcycle accident, but many believe that the accident was trivial and that Dylan was really using it as an excuse to escape the mounting pressures and obligations of superstardom. By the time of his retreat to the country at age 25, Dylan had recorded two very good albums (*Another Side of Bob Dylan*, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*), two magnificent albums (*The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, *Bringing It All Back Home*) and two albums that neither he nor anyone else would ever surpass (*Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*). He had become the object of more international fascination than any individual since Byron. He had proved himself to be the wittier and more moving composer and performer of folk songs to have come out of the folk movement, and the writer of the more important protest songs in the days of the civil-rights movement. He had made a second career, as it were, in rock n' roll and had become arguably the most important figure in rock history – more important than Elvis because he wrote his own songs, full of musical imagination; more important than the Beatles because of his sway over John Lennon, his lyrics (*I Am the Walrus* – sounds like Dylan on his day off) and his bluesiness; more important than the Rolling Stones because, well, he was more important than the Rolling Stones. He had dominated the ultrahip Warhol-Chelsea Hotel scene and had taken more drug earlier than Lou Reed; he was a very sharp dresser.

And Dylan's influence was pervasive. A partial list of the things Dylan is primarily or exclusively responsible for would have to include protest music, hostile press conferences, Jimi Hendrix's hair, cheap sunglasses, pretentious liner notes, singer-songwriters with horrible voices, two-record sets, turning the Beatles on to marijuana, and sincere, pastry-faced folksingers who make every subway on the planet a living hell.

Given the apex of political, musical and lyrical coolness that Dylan had reached in 1966, it should come as no surprise that the subsequent acts of his life have been less satisfying. For a quarter of a century he has suffered from the fact that had he hit his head a bit harder one July

afternoon in the Catskills, he would be regarded as the rock James Dean, the tortured genius who lived fast, died young and left an exquisite corpse. The Jim Morrison cult would have looked like some minor sect compared with the posthumous religion of Dylan. As music critic Stephen Fried says, Dylan's early demise would have suited some people just fine: "Critics want rock stars to make three great albums and then die." Which a surprising number have been more than willing to do.

But Dylan did not die. Instead, he lived on to make one album, *Blood on the Tracks*, that may just be the equal of *Blonde On Blonde*, three others that are worth buying (*John Wesley Harding*, *Desire* and *Slow Train Coming*) and three others that are worth thinking about buying (*Shot Of Love*, *Infidels*, *Oh Mercy*).

Dylan lived to become a born-again Christian in the 1970s. (He was raised Jewish and his real name is Robert Zimmerman. Despite his conversion, he appeared on the Chabad telethon in 1989 performing "*Hava Negila*" as part of a trio called *Chopped Liver*.) Dylan lived to bloat his raw, crackling sound grotesquely with full-tilt, hydrocephalic, late period-Elvis production values – the uptown horns, the Jimmy Smith organ swells, the oohing-and-aahing girl backup singers who make Dylan sound as if he were being held hostage in an abandoned warehouse by Gladys Knight and the Pips. And, perhaps worst of all, Dylan lived to appear in the never-released 1986 film *Hearts Of Fire*, in which he plays an ageing rock star who raises chickens.

With *Infidels* in 1983 and *Oh Mercy* in 1989, each of which has a handful of fine songs, Dylan raised hopes that he could return to something like his old form. After *Infidels*, these hopes were greeted with *Empire Burlesque*, a record of which Neil Diamond would be proud; after *Oh Mercy*, these hopes were greeted with *Under The Red Sky*. *Under The Red Sky* includes the song '*Wiggle Wiggle*'. Its lyrics run. "*Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, like a bowl of soup/Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle like a rolling hoop*" (Actually these are not the most embarrassing lyrics Dylan has ever written. Those lyrics are from his 1979 song "*Gonna Serve Somebody*". '*You may call me Terry, you may call me Timmy/You may call me Bobby, you may call me Zimmy*.') Peter, Paul and Mary made 22-year-old Bob Dylan a songwriting star with their massively successful recording of "*Blowin' in the Wind*" in 1963. Says Peter Yarrow. "One can surmise that [Dylan] does these things from the heart and doesn't scope out the sagacity of everything he does. That's what keeps him clean." He adds, "What we're seeing is works in progress that didn't work."

"There aren't many steady-on albums," says Joan Baez, who also helped make Dylan famous almost three decades ago. Indeed, Dylan may finally have achieved the mediocrity and near oblivion he has seemed, perversely, to seek for so long. His work with the Traveling Wilburys is fun but silly. (Noel Stookey, the "Paul" of Peter, Paul and Mary says of the Wilburys "It's a little like going bowling.") *Biograph*, released in 1985, is a 53-song compilation that is impressive only because it reminds you of Dylan's past. The three-CD *Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3*, issued by Columbia last spring, contains a lot of alternate tracks and unrelated songs that were probably left off Dylan albums because they were the ninth-best cuts he'd recorded that week. Never a great commercial success, Dylan has had sales of about 300,000 copies with his recent albums (M.C. Hammer's latest has sold 15 million). As a result of sixties nostalgia, college students do feel they should own one Dylan record, so he has become to campuses of the early 1990s what John Coltrane was to campuses of the early 1970s.

Dylan will continue to put out record after record; he will continue to tour and tour and tour. Only now, any hope for a sustained return of Dylan's wit, intelligence and passion may finally – finally- have died. If his audiences still had that hope, he would disappoint them, but he does not even do that.

THE REASONS FOR DYLAN'S ARRIVAL AT THIS PASS ARE A SUBJECT OF ENDLESS FASCINATION to his admirers. Some point to Dylan's split from his wife, Sara Lowndes, with whom he had four children, in 1977. (Among other problems, Mrs. Dylan was shocked to find that her rock-star husband had strayed into the arms of other women while he was on the road.) Others wonder whether Dylan's fondness for intoxicants has begun to tell on him.

Mick Taylor, the ex-Rolling Stones lead guitarist whose playing helped make Dylan's 1983 album *Infidels* such a success, clearly idolizes Dylan. Nevertheless, he is puzzled as to why Dylan would leave a profoundly beautiful song like "*Blind Willie McTell*" off *Infidels* while including several so-so tracks. Does anyone working with Dylan ever try to intervene when the songwriter makes such decisions? "There are certain people who can sit down and say things to Bob Dylan," Taylor says. "He just doesn't have to listen to them." If the results are so often so painful, though, you wonder why Dylan releases about an album a year. Taylor speculates that this decision has little to do with Dylan's boundless creative energy. "It's to fulfill contracts, I guess," says Taylor. "When he made Infidels, you could see that he was really inspired, and that he's a really great singer when he's relaxed. But when I talked to him recently," he said, **"You know me, Mick; I can only write songs when my back is to the wall."**

Dylan volunteers the same answer when asked why he makes records. **"Usually my records are turned in on some kind of a contractual deadline"** he says. **"If they didn't want me with the company, they wouldn't continue to give me a contract. They're just records that are fulfilling my contract, which they give to me."** He laughs merrily. Asked if there are some records he cares about more than others. Dylan replies, **"Well. yeah. There are some that stay with you longer than others... To me, though, there's something about all of them that I get something out of. They're just not all filler."** Does that mean there *is* some filler on his records? **"Some filler,"** says Dylan. **"Oh, yeah – depending on what your standards of filler might be. There's a filler, and then there's songs that aren't performed as good as they could be for all kinds of reasons. There's some songs buried on my records that are good songs that just aren't performed well, and then there's some songs that are performed well that aren't necessarily very good songs."**

Dylan's work habits certainly don't encourage consistency. "He doesn't like to explain things," say Taylor. "He comes into the studio and starts playing the piano, and you just have to make sure the engineer has the tape running." Responding to the complaints of fussbudgets who have taken him to task for his carefree, let's-make-an-album-and-get-out-of-here-by-mid-night approach to recording, Dylan has periodically enlisted respected producers to help him make well-engineered bad records to stand in contrast to his early badly engineered great records. Fortunately, these producers have usually failed to change Dylan's ways, thus saving him from making the kind of gorgeous, fake records that Paul Simon – with his ingenious brand of tribal Muzak – has perfected.

"People say that [I make a lot of records]," Dylan says. **"Well, Willie Nelson puts out maybe ten times as many records as me. Merle Haggard puts out a record all the time. You know, it's all part of a racket."**

It may be a racket, but no one can accuse Dylan of micromanaging his career. Consider his new video, a quintessential Dylan project in that it features a terrific song, "*Series of Dreams*," that Dylan inexplicably left off *Oh Mercy*. When Dylan is asked how much input he supplied to the project, he replies, **"Not much. They had me come downtown to a meat-packing place and photographed me walking around."** Told that the video intersperses elastic 1960s Dylan footage with ominous pictures of Jack Kerouac's grave, he exclaims, **"What?! Why'd they put something like that in there?"** Then he thinks about it. **"Maybe it had something to do with the**

song. But it's not me that made that video. Nobody's even shown it to me. This was something that was done with very little participation on my part."

Both Dylan's relentlessness and his perversity are evident in his concerts. He has been performing almost non stop for 17 years – on the Never-Ending Tour, as he called it in 1988. Will he tour forever? **"Oh, yeah. When you start out, that's what you want to do. You want to be able to work in this arena no matter what. In good times or bad times."** Like Chuck Berry, like Ray Charles, Dylan crosses the country and the world, performing over and over in the same halls, year after year. And like those artists, he has been doing what amounts to an oldies show: more than half of his West Point concert, for instance, consisted of songs written before 1966. But at least Dylan has made it the world's strangest, sloppiest oldies show. Usually the tour bands simply scaffold his songs with indiscriminate session-man rock. The British punk-folkie Billy Bragg admires Dylan for the way he performs live. "He's not letting them wallow in nostalgia. He plays "*Wiggle Wiggle*" with the same conviction that he plays "*The Times They Are A-Changin'*" He's deconstructing his songs right in front of your very eyes. He's trying to demythologize himself."

He's succeeding. At his concert late last year at New York's Beacon Theater, the audience repeatedly tried to sing along with hits such as "*Like a Rolling Stone*" Dylan was having none of that. By speeding up the songs or spitting out the lyrics in mangled Dylanese, he made it impossible for anyone to sing along with him. **"They can't do that, and they never could,"** he says, with more assertiveness than at any other point in the interview. **"That was never my thing; nobody could ever sing along with me. Well, maybe a couple people down in front in the first row, but outside of that it's very difficult to sing along with me because it's never clear to me where my own voice is going."** He goes on, laughing, **"Well, you know, 20,000 people singing "*Darkness on the Edge of Town*," you know, like... one night Bruce** [Springsteen] **had everybody singing that with him, and it sounded pretty good, and it's something people think about, but it's never really occurred to me to make people do that."**

Maybe anarchy is better than a roomful of thickened, balding dads accompanying the Four Tops on their 65,000th identical rendition of "*It's the Same Old Song*," but it's still an oldies show. Dylan, however, says it isn't his fault if the majority of the songs he performs are more than 20 years old. A decade ago he tried to do new songs. The response was terrible. **"People didn't like those tunes,"** he says. **"They rejected all that stuff when my show would be all off the new album. People would shout, 'We want to hear the old songs'. You know... at a certain point, it doesn't really matter anymore."**

WELL, EXACTLY. ON A CHILLY OCTOBER NIGHT IN WEST POINT, DYLAN CHARGES HIS way through number after number. He plays "*Gates of Eden*" and "*Blowin' in the Wind*," and the rows of cadets look on in delight, oblivious to the meaning or probably even the identity of the songs in their mutated forms. One oldie ends this way:

And I hope that you die
And your death'll come soon
I will follow your casket
In the pale afternoon
And I'll watch while you're lowered
Down to your deathbed
And I'll stand o'er your grave
'Til I'm sure that you're dead.

The words are unintelligible, but the folkies are happy. The Audi owners are enjoying themselves. The Garth Hudson impersonators are glad they came. The kids in the tie-dyed

sixties-retro T-shirts seem pleasantly surprised by how loud the band is playing. The cadets applaud. Even without the Rockettes, "*Masters of War*" goes over pretty well.

Now see just what Dylan's men had to say about the above interview/article by Queenan -

I SPY A RAT, DYLAN'S AGENT SAYS OF MAGAZINE INTERVIEW
WASHINGTON POST

When Bob Dylan turned 50 recently many folks meditated on what it all meant. But only *Spy*, the funny and often acerbic New York magazine, ran an interview, which didn't sit well with Dylan's media consultant, Elliot Mintz. Mintz thought the interview request was for a cover story in the *New York Times Magazine* at a time that also saw the release of Dylan's *Bootleg* set and the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. Mintz agreed to set something up with writer Joe Queenan.

The interview was actually a 15-minute phone conversation, but it was enough for Queenan, a writer for both *Spy* and *Forbes* who says, "I basically slam people most of the time."

The story had indeed been assigned by the *Times*, and what Queenan says he turned in was a tough 7,000-word analysis – "flip, direct, sarcastic, not the *Times* voice" – suggesting that Dylan's work after his 1975 album *Desire* left much to be desired and that, with a few notable exceptions, he had remained stuck in his early '70s sound and made some bad choices, particularly in movies and religions. The *Times* magazine said no, although the Arts and Leisure section offered to buy the interview portion of the piece, fresh Dylan quotes being a precious commodity. This time Queenan said no and sold the story to *Spy*, which toned it down a bit and ran it in July without any suggestion that its origins and access to Dylan lay elsewhere.

Mintz, who says he was informed about the shift after the fact, called it "a gross misrepresentation. Bob would never have agreed to an interview with Spy."

Queenan, who says he lost money waiting for Dylan and Mintz to make up their minds, says: "I wish I had never started that piece."

As for the call, "I ended it. I couldn't stand it anymore. It was like talking to Arlo Guthrie -he just didn't sound like Bob Dylan. He just didn't care."

4 April 1991
Paul Zollo (*SongTalk*) Interview, Beverly Hills, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 947-963.

The interview took place in a bungalow of the Beverley Hills Hotel on April 4th. The resulting article – *Bob Dylan The Song Talk Interview* – by Paul Zollo (PZ) was eventually published in the Winter 1991 Issue (Volume 2, Issue 16) of *SongTalk*, the newspaper published by the National Academy of songwriters. There is an occasional contribution from Elliott Mintz (EM).

"*I've made shoes for everyone, even you, while I still go barefoot*"
— from "I and I" by Bob Dylan

"Songwriting? What do I know about songwriting?" Bob Dylan asked, and then broke into laughter. He was wearing blue jeans and a white tank top T-shirt, and drinking coffee out of a glass. **"It tastes better out of a glass,"** he said, grinning, His blonde acoustic guitar was leaning on a couch near where we sat. Bob Dylan's guitar. His influence is so vast that everything that surrounds him takes on enlarged significance: Bob Dylan's moccasins, Bob Dylan 's coat.

"*And the ghost of 'lectricity howls in the bones of her face*
Where these visions of Johanna have now taken my place.
The harmonicas play like skeleton keys and the rain
And these visions of Johanna are now all that remain"
— from "Visions of Johanna"

Pete Seeger said, "all songwriters are links in a chain," yet there are few artists in this evolutionary arc whose influence is as profound as that of Bob Dylan. It's hard to imagine the art of songwriting as we know it without him. Though he insists in this interview that "somebody else would have done it," he was the instigator, the one who knew that songs could do more, that they could take on more. He knew that songs could contain a lyrical richness and meaning far beyond the scope of all previous pop songs, that they could possess as much beauty and power as the greatest poetry, and that by being written in rhythm and rhyme and merged with music, they could speak to our souls.

Starting with the models made by his predecessors, such as the talking blues, Dylan quickly discarded old forms and began to fashion new ones. He broke all the rules of songwritng without abandoning the craft and care that holds songs together. He brought the linguistic beauty of Shakespeare, Byron, and Dylan Thomas, and the expansiveness and beat experimentation of Ginsberg, Kerouac and Ferlinghetti, to the folk poetry of Woody Guthrie and Hank Williams. And when the world was still in the midst of accepting this new form, he brought music to a new place again, fusing it with the electricity of rock and roll.

"Basically, he showed that anything goes," Robbie Robertson said. John Lennon said that it was hearing Dylan that allowed him to make the leap from writing empty pop songs to expressing the actuality of his life and the depths of his own soul. "*Help*" was a real call for help, he said, and prior to hearing Dylan it didn't occur to him that songs could contain such direct meaning. When we asked Paul Simon how he made the leap in his writing from fifties rock and roll songs like "*Hey Schoolgirl*" to writing "*Sound of Silence*" he said, "I really can't imagine it could have been anyone else besides Bob Dylan."

"Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky
with one hand waving free,
silhouetted by the sea,
circled by the circus sands,
With all memory and fate
driven deep beneath the waves,
Let me forget about today until tomorrow."
— from "Mr. Tambourine Man"

There's an unmistakable elegance in Dylan's words, an almost biblical beauty that he has sustained in his songs throughout the years. He refers to it as a "gallantry" in the following, and pointed to it as the single thing that sets his songs apart from others. Though he's maybe more famous for the freedom and expansiveness of his lyrics, all of his songs possess this exquisite care and love for the language. As Shakespeare and Byron did in their times, Dylan has taken English, perhaps the world's plainest language, and instilled it with a timeless, mythic grace.

"Ring them bells, sweet Martha,
for the poor man's son
Ring them bells so the world will know
that God is one
Oh, the shepherd is asleep
where the willows weep
and the mountains are filled with lost sheep."
— from "Ring Them Bells"

As much as he has stretched, expanded and redefined the rules of songwriting, Dylan is a tremendously meticulous craftsman. A brutal critic of his own work, he works and reworks the words of his songs in the studio and even continues to rewrite certain ones even after they've been recorded and released. **"They're not written in stone,"** he said. With such a wondrous wealth of language at his fingertips, he discards imagery and lines other songwriters would sell their souls to discover.

The Bootleg Series, a recently released collection of previously unreleased recordings, offers a rare opportunity to see the revisions and regroupings his songs go through. "*Idiot Wind*" is one of his angriest songs (**"You don't hear a song like that every day,"** he said), which he recorded on *Blood On The Tracks* in a way that reflects this anger, emphasizing lines of condemnation like "*one day you'll be in the ditch, flies buzzin' around your eyes, blood on your saddle*." On *The Bootleg Series*, we'd get an alternative approach to the song, a quiet, tender reading of the same lines that makes the inherent disquiet of the song even more disturbing, the tenderness of Dylan's delivery adding a new level of genuine sadness to lines like "*people see me all the time and they just can't remember how to act*."

The peak moment of the song is the penultimate chorus when Dylan addresses America: "*Idiot wind, blowing like a circle around my skull, from the Grand Coulee Dam to the Capitol*." On the *Bootleg* version, this famous line is still in formation: "*Idiot wind, blowing every time you move your jaw, from the Grand Coulee Dam to the Mardi Gras*"

His song "*Jokerman*" also went through a similar evolution, as a still unreleased bootleg of the song reveals. Like "*Idiot Wind,*" the depth and intensity of the lyric is sustained over an extraordinary amount of verses, yet even more scenes were shot that wound up on the cutting room floor, evidence of an artist overflowing with the abundance of creation:

> *"It's a shadowy world*
> *skies are slippery gray*
> *A woman just gave birth to a prince today*
> *and dressed him in scarlet*
> *He'll put the priest in his pocket,*
> *put the blade to the heat*
> *Take the motherless children off the street*
> *And place them at the feet of the harlot"*
> — from "*Jokerman*" on *Infidels*

> *"It's a shadowy world*
> *skies are slippery gray*
> *A woman just gave birth to a prince today*
> *and she's dressed in scarlet*
> *He'll turn priests in to pimps*
> *and make all men bark*
> *Take a woman who could have been Joan of Arc*
> *And turn her into a harlot"*
> — from "*Jokerman*" on *Infidels*

Often Dylan lays abstraction aside and writes songs as clear and telling as any of Woody Guthrie's narrative ballads, finding heroes and antiheroes in our modern times as Woody found in his. Some of these subjects might be thought of as questionable choices for heroic treatment, such as underworld boss Joey Gallo, about whom he wrote the astounding song "*Joey*". It's a song that's remarkable for its cinematic clarity; Dylan paints a picture of a life and death so explicit and exact that we can see every frame of it, and even experience Gallo's death as if we were sitting there watching it. And he does it with a rhyme scheme and a meter that makes the immediacy of the imagery even more striking:

> *"One day they blew him down in a clam bar in New York*
> *He could see it coming through the door*
> *as he lifted up his fork,*
> *He pushed the table over to protect his family*
> *Then he staggered out into the streets of Little Italy."*
> — from "*Joey*"

"Yes, well, what can you know about anybody?" Dylan asked, and it's a good question. He's been a mystery for years, "kind of impenetrable, really," Paul Simon said, and that mystery is not penetrated by this interview. Dylan's answers are often more enigmatic than the questions themselves, and like his songs, they give you a lot to think about while not necessarily revealing much about the man.

In person, as others have noted, he is Chaplinesque. His body is smaller and his head bigger than one might expect, giving the effect of a kid wearing a Bob Dylan mask. He possesses one of the worlds most striking faces; while certain stars might seem surprisingly normal and unimpressive in the flesh, Dylan is perhaps even more startling to confront than one might expect. Seeing those eyes and that nose, it's clear it could be no one else than he, and to sit at a table with him and face those iconic features is no less impressive than suddenly finding yourself sitting face to face with William Shakespeare. It's a face we associate with an enormous, amazing body of work, work that has changed the world. But it's not really the kind of face one expects to encounter in everyday life.

Though Van Morrison and others have called him the world's greatest poet, he doesn't think of himself as a poet. **"Poets drown in lakes,"** he said to us. Yet he's written some of the most beautiful poetry the world has known, poetry of love and outrage, of abstraction and clarity, of timelessness and relativity. Though he is faced with the evidence of a catalogue of songs that could contain the whole careers of a dozen fine songwriters, Dylan told us he doesn't consider himself to be a professional songwriter. **"For me it's always been more *con*-fessional than *pro*-fessional,"** he said in a distinctive Dylan cadence. **"My songs aren't written on a schedule."**

Well, how *are* they written, we asked? This is the question at the heart of this interview, the main one that comes to mind when looking over all the albums, or witnessing the amazing array of moods, masks, styles and forms all represented on the recently released *Bootleg Series*. How has he done it? It was the first question asked, and though he deflected it at first with his customary humor, it's a question we returned to a few times.

"Start me off somewhere," he said smiling, as if he might be left alone to divulge the secrets of his songwriting, and our talk began.

ST = SongTalk, BD = Bob Dylan

ST: Okay, Arlo Guthrie recently said, "Songwriting is like fishing in a stream; you put in your line and hope you catch something. And I don't think anyone downstream from Bob Dylan ever caught anything."

BD: [Much laughter]

ST: Any idea how you've been able to catch so many?

BD: [Laughs] **It's probably the bait.** [More laughter]

ST: What kind of bait do you use?

BD: Uh... bait... You've got to use some bait. Otherwise you sit around and expect songs to come to you. Forcing it is using bait.

ST: Does that work for you?

BD: Well, no. Throwing yourself into a situation that would demand a response is using bait. People who write about stuff that hasn't really happened to them are inclined to do that.

ST: When you write songs, do you try to consciously guide the meaning or do you try to follow subconscious directions?

BD: Well, you know, motivation is something you never know behind any song, really. Anybody's song, you never know what the motivation was. It's nice to be able to put yourself in an environment where you can completely accept all the unconscious stuff that comes to you from the inner workings of your mind. And block yourself off to where you can control it all, take it down...

Edgar Allen Poe must have done that. People who are dedicated writers, of which there are some, but mostly people get their information today over a television set or some kind of a way that's hitting them on all their senses. It's not just a great novel anymore. You have to be able to get the thoughts out of your mind.

ST: How do you do that?

BD: Well, first of all, there's two kinds of thoughts in your mind: there's good thoughts and evil thoughts. Both come through your mind. Some people are more loaded down with one than another. Nevertheless, they come through. And you have to be able to sort them out, if you want to be a songwriter, if you want to be a song singer. You must get rid of all that baggage. You ought to be able to sort out those thoughts, because they don't mean anything, they're just pulling you around, too. It's important to get rid of all them thoughts.

Then you can do something from some kind of surveillance of the situation. You have some kind of place where you can see it but it can't affect you. Where you can bring

something to the matter, besides just take, take, take, take. As so many situations in life are today. Take, take, take, that's all that is. What's in it for me? That syndrome that started in the Me Decade, whenever that was. We're still in that. It's still happening.

ST: Is songwriting for you more a sense of taking something from someplace else?

BD: Well, someplace else is always a heart beat away. There's no rhyme or reason to it. That's what makes it so attractive. There isn't any rule. You can still have your wits about you and do something that gets you off in a multitude of ways. As you very well know, or else you yourself wouldn't be doing it.

ST: Your songs often bring us back to other times, and are filled with mythic, magical images. A song like *Changing Of The Guard* seems to take place centuries ago, with lines like "*They shaved her head/she was torn between Jupiter and Apollo/a messenger arrived with a black nightingale...*". How do you connect with a song like that?

BD: [Pause] **A song like that, there's no way of knowing, after the fact, unless somebody's there to take it down in chronological order, what the motivation was behind it.**

[Pause] **But on one level, of course, it's no different from anything else of mine. It's the same amount of metric verses like a poem. To me, like a poem. The melodies in my mind are very simple, they're just based on music we've all heard growing up. And that and music which went beyond that, which went back further, Elizabethan ballads and what not...**

To me, it's old [laughs] **It's old. It's not something, with my minimal amount of talent, if you could call it that, minimum amount... To me somebody coming along now would definitely read what's out there if they're seriously concerned with being an artist when they get to be Picasso's age. You're better off learning some music theory. You're just better off, yeah, if you want to write songs. Rather than just take a hillbilly twang, you know, and try to base it all on that. Even country music is more orchestrated than it used to be. You're better off having some feel for music that you don't have to carry in your head, that you can write down. To me those are the people who... are serious about this craft. People who go about it that way. Not people who just want to pour out their insides and they got to get a big idea out and they want to tell the world about this, sure, you can do it through a song, you always could. You can use a song for anything, you know. The world don't need any more songs.**

ST: You don't think so?

BD: No, they've got enough. They've got way too many. As a matter of fact, if nobody wrote any songs from this day on, the world ain't gonna suffer for it. Nobody cares. There's enough songs for people to listen to, if they want to listen to songs. For every man, woman and child on earth, they could be sent, probably, each of them, a hundred records, and never be repeated. There's enough songs. Unless someone's gonna come along with a pure heart and has something to say. That's a different story.

But as far as songwriting, any idiot could do it. [Laughs] **It's just not that difficult of a thing. Everybody writes a song just like everybody's got that one great novel in them.**

There aren't a lot of people like me. You just had your interview with Neil [Young], **John Mellencamp... Of course, most of my ilk that came along write their own songs and play them. It wouldn't matter if anybody ever made another record. They've got enough songs.**

To me, someone who writes really good songs is Randy Newman. There's a lot of people who write good songs. As songs. Now Randy might not go out on stage and knock you out, or knock your socks off. And he's not going to get people thrilled in the front row. But he's gonna write a better song than most people who can do it. You know, he's got that down to an art. Now Randy knows music. He knows music. But it doesn't get any better than "*Louisiana*" or "*Cross Charleston Bay*" [*Sail Away*]. **It doesn't get any better than that. That's like a classically heroic anthem theme. He did it. There's quite a few people who did it. Not that many people in Randy's class.**

Brian Wilson. He can write melodies that will beat the band. Three people could combine on a song and make it a great song. If one person would have written the same song, maybe you would never have heard of it. It might get buried on some... rap record. [Laughs].

ST: Still, when you've come out with some of your new albums of songs, those songs fit that specific time better than any songs that had already been written. Your new songs have always shown us new possibilities.

BD: It's not a good idea and it's bad luck to look for life's guidance to popular entertainers. It's bad luck to do that. No one should do that. Popular entertainers are fine, there's nothing the matter with that, but as long as you know where you're standing and what ground you're on, many of them, they don't know what they're doing either.

ST: But your songs are more than pop entertainment...

BD: Some people say so. Not to me.

ST: No?

BD: Pop entertainment means nothing to me. Nothing. You know, Madonna's good, she's talented, she puts all kinds of stuff together, she's learned her thing... But it's the kind of thing which takes years and years out of your life to be able to do. You've got to sacrifice a whole lot to do that. Sacrifice. If you want to make it big, you've got to sacrifice a whole lot.

It's all the same, it's all the same. [Laughs]

ST: Van Morrison said that you are our greatest living poet. Do you think of yourself in those terms?

BD: [Pause] **Sometimes. It's within me. It's within me to put myself up and be a poet. But it's dedication,** [Softly] **It's a big dedication.**

[Pause] **Poet's don't drive big cars to the supermarket. Poets don't empty the garbage. Poets aren't on the PTA. Poets, you know, they don't go picket the Better Housing Bureau, or whatever. Poets don't... Poets don't even speak on the telephone. Poets don't even talk to anybody. Poets do a lot of listening and... and *usually they know why they're poets*!** [Laughs]

Yeah, there are... what can you say? The world don't need any more poems, it's got Shakespeare. There's enough of everything. You name it, there's enough of it. There was too much of it with electricity, maybe, some people said that, some people said the light bulb was going too far.

Poets live on the land. They behave in a gentlemanly way. And live by their own gentlemanly code.

[Pause] **And die broke. Or drown in lakes. Poets usually have very unhappy endings. Look at Keats' life. Look at Jim Morrison, if you want to call him a poet. Although some people say that he really is in the Andes.**

ST: Do you think so?

BD: Well, it never crossed my mind to think one way or the other about it, but you do hear that talk. Piggyback in the Andes. Riding a donkey.

ST: People have a hard time believing that Shakespeare really wrote all of his work because there is so much of it. Do you have a hard time accepting that?

BD: People have a hard time accepting anything that overwhelms them.

ST: Might they think that of you, years from now, that no one man could have produced so much incredible work?

BD: They could. They could look back and think nobody produced it. [Softly] **It's not to anybody's best interest to think about how they will be perceived tomorrow. It hurts you in the long run.**

ST: But aren't there songs of yours that you know will always be around?

BD: Who's gonna sing them? My songs really aren't meant to be covered. No, not really. Can you think of... Well, they do get covered, but it's covered. They're not intentionally written to be covered but okay, they do.

ST: Your songs are much more enjoyable to sing and play than most songs –

BD: Do you play them on piano or guitar?

ST: Both.

BD: Acoustic guitar?

ST: Mostly.

BD: Do you play jazz? It never hurts to learn as many chords as you can. All kinds. Sometimes it will change the inflection of a whole song, a straight chord or, say, an augmented seventh chord.

ST: Do you have favorite keys to work in?

BD: On the piano, my favorite keys are the black keys. And they sound better on guitar, too. Sometimes, when a song's in a flat key, say B flat, bring it to the guitar, you might want to put it in A. But... that's an interesting thing you just said. It changes the reflection. Mainly in mine the songs sound different. They sound... when you take a black key song and put it on guitar, which means you're playing in A flat, not too many people like to play in those keys. To me it doesn't matter. [Laughs] **It doesn't matter because my fingering is the same anyway. So there are songs that, even without the piano, which is the dominant sound if you're playing in the black keys -why else would you play in that key except to have the dominant piano sound? – the songs that go into those keys right from the piano, they sound different. They sound deeper. Yeah. They sound deeper. Everything sounds deeper in those black keys. They're not guitar keys, though. Guitar bands don't usually like to play in those keys, which kind of gives me an idea, actually, of a couple of songs that could actually sound better in black keys.**

ST: Do keys have different colors for you?

BD: Sure. Sure. [Softly] **Sure.**

ST: You've written some great A minor songs. I think of "*One More Cup of Coffee*" -

BD: Right. B minor might sound even better.

ST: How come?

BD: Well, It might sound better because you're playing a lot of open chords if you're playing in A minor. If you play in B minor, it will force you to play higher. And the chords... you're bound, someplace along the line, because there are so many chords in that song, or seem to be anyway, you're bound someplace along the line to come down to an open chord on the bottom. From B. You would hit an E someplace along the line.

Try it in B minor. [Laughs] **Maybe it will be a hit for you. A hit is a number one song, isn't it? Yeah.**

ST: When you sit down to write a song, do you pick a key first that will fit the song? Or do you change keys while you're writing?

BD: Yeah, yeah. Maybe like in the middle of the thing. There are ways you can get out of whatever you've gotten into. You want to get out of it. It's bad enough getting into it. But the thing to do as soon as you get into it is realize you must get out of it. And unless you get out of it quickly and effortlessly, there's no use staying in it. It will just drag you down. You could be spending years writing the same song, telling the same story, doing the same thing.

So once you involve yourself in it, once you accidentally have slipped into it, the thing is to get out. So your primary impulse is going to take you so far. But then you might think, well, you know, is this one of these things where it's all just going to come? And then all of a sudden you start thinking. And when my mind starts thinking, "What's happening now? Oh, there's a story here," and my mind starts to get into it, that's trouble right away. That's usually big trouble. And as far as never seeing this thing again.

There's a bunch of ways you can get out of that. You can make yourself get out of it by changing key. That's one way. Just take the whole thing and change key, keeping the same melody. And see if that brings you any place. More times than not, if that will take

you down the road. You don't want to be on a collision course. But that will take you down the road. Somewhere.

And then if that fails, and that will run out, too, then you can always go back to where you started. Yeah, because anything you do in A, it's going to be a different song in G. While you're writing it, anyway. There's too many wide passing notes in G [on the guitar] **not to influence your writing, unless you're playing barre chords.**

ST: Do you ever switch instruments, like from guitar to piano, while writing?

BD: Not so much that way. Although when it's time to record something for me, sometimes a song that has been written on piano with just lyrics here in my hand, it'll be time to play it now on guitar. So it will come out differently. But it wouldn't have influenced the writing of the song at all.

Changing keys influences the writing of the song. Changing keys on the same instrument. For me, that works. I think for somebody else, the other thing works. Everything is different.

ST: I interviewed Pete Seeger recently –

BD: He's a great man, Pete Seeger.

ST: I agree. He said, "All song writers are links in a chain". Without your link in that chain, all of songwriting would have evolved much differently. You said how you brought folk music to rock music. Do you think that would have happened without you?

BD: Somebody else would have done it in some other kind of way. But, hey, so what? So what? You can lead people astray awfully easy.

Would people have been better off? Sure. They would have found somebody else. Maybe different people would have found different people, and would have been influenced by different people.

ST: You brought the song to a new place. Is there still a new place to bring songs? Will they continue to evolve?

BD: [Pause] **The evolution of song is like a snake with its tail in its mouth. That's evolution. That's what it is. As soon as you're there, you find your tail.**

ST: Would it be okay with you if I mentioned some lines from your songs out of context to see what reaction you might have to them?

BD: Sure. You can name anything you want to name, man.

ST: *"I stand here looking at your yellow railroad in the ruins of your balcony....* " [from *Absolutely Sweet Marie*].

BD: [Pause] **Okay. That's an old song. No, let's say not even old. How old? Too old. It's matured well. It's like old wine. Now, you know, look, that's as complete as you can be. Every single letter in that line. It's all true. On a literal and on an escapist level.**

ST: And is it that truth that adds so much resonance to it?

BD: Oh yeah, exactly. See, you can pull it apart and it's like, Yellow railroad? Well, yeah. Yeah, yeah. All of it.

ST: *"I was lying down in the reeds without any oxygen /I saw you in the wilderness among the men /I saw you drift into infinity and come back again...* " (from *True Love Tends To Forget*).

BD: Those are probably lyrics left over from my songwriting days with Jacques Levy. To me, that's what they sound like.

Getting back to the yellow railroad, that could be from looking some place. Being a performer you travel the world.

You're not just looking off the same window every day. You're not just walking down the same old street. So you must make yourself observe whatever. But most of the time it hits you. You don't have to observe. It hits you. Like "yellow railroad" could have been a blinding day when the sun was so bright on a railroad someplace and it stayed on my mind.

These aren't contrived images. These are images which are just in there and have got to come out. You know, if it's in there it's got to come out.

ST: *"And the chains of the sea will be busted in the night..."* [from *When The Ship Comes In*]

BD: To me, that song says a whole lot. Patti LaBelle should do that. You know? You know, there again, that comes from hanging out at a lot of poetry gatherings. Those kind of images are very romantic. They're very gothic and romantic at the same time. And they have a sweetness to it, also. So It's a combination of a lot of different elements at the time. That's not a contrived line. That's not sitting down and writing a song. Those kind of songs, they just come out. They're in you so they've got to come out.

ST: *"Standing on the water casting your bread/while the eyes of the idol with the iron head are glowing... "* [from *Jokerman*].

BD: [Blows small Peruvian flute] **Which one is that?**

ST: That's from *Jokerman*.

BD: That's a song that got away from me. Lots of songs on that album [*Infidels*] **got away from me. They just did.**

ST: You mean in the writing?

BD: Yeah. They hung around too long. They were better before they were tampered with. Of course, it was me tampering with them [Laughs]**. Yeah. That could have been a good song. It could have been.**

ST: I think it's tremendous.

BD: Oh you do? It probably didn't hold up for me because in my mind it had been written and rewritten and written again. One of those kind of things.

ST: *"But the enemy I see wears a cloak of decency..."* [from *Slow Train*].

BD: Now don't tell me... wait... Is that *When You Gonna Wake Up*?

ST: No, that's from *Slow Train*.

BD: Oh, wow. Oh, yeah. Wow. There again. That's a song that you could write a song to every line in the song. You could.

ST: Many of your songs are like that?

BD: Well, you know, that's not good either. Not really. In the long run, it could have stood up better by maybe doing just that, maybe taking every line and making a song out of it. If somebody had the willpower.

But that line, there again, is an intellectual line. It's a line, *"Well, the enemy I see wears a cloak of decency,"* that could be a lie. It just could be. Whereas *"Standing under your yellow railroad,"* that's not a lie.

To Woody Guthrie, see, the airwaves were sacred. And when he'd hear something false, it was on airwaves that were sacred to him. His songs weren't false. Now we know the airwaves aren't sacred but to him they were.

So that influenced a lot of people with me coming up. Like, "You know, all those songs on the Hit Parade are just a bunch of shit, anyway." It influenced me in the beginning when nobody had heard that. Nobody had heard that. You know, "If I give my heart to you, will you handle it with care?" Or "I'm getting sentimental over you." Who gives a shit? It could be said in a great way, and the performer could put the song across, but come on, that's because he's a great performer not because it's a great song. Woody was also a performer and songwriter. So a lot of us got caught up in that. There ain't anything good on the radio. It doesn't happen. Then, of course, the Beatles came along and kind of grabbed everybody by the throat. You were for them or against them. You were for them or you joined them, or whatever. Then everybody said, Oh, popular songs ain't so bad, and then everyone wanted to get on the radio. [Laughs] **Before that it didn't matter. My first records were never played on the radio. It was unheard of! Folk records weren't played on the radio. You never heard them on the radio and nobody cared if they were on the radio.**

Going on into it farther, after the Beatles came out and everybody from England, Rock and Roll still is an American thing. Folk music is not. Rock and Roll is an American thing, it's just all kind of twisted. But the English kind of threw it back, didn't they? And they made everybody respect it once more. So everybody wanted to get on the radio.

Now nobody even knows what radio is anymore. Nobody likes it that you talk to. Nobody listens to it. But then again, it's bigger than it ever was. But nobody knows how to really respond to it. Nobody can shut it off. [Laughs]**. You know? And people really aren't sure whether they want to be on the radio or whether they don't want to be on the radio. They might want to sell a lot of records, but people always did that. But being a folk performer, having hits, it wasn't important. Whatever that has to do with anything...** [laughs]**.**

ST: Your songs, like Woody's, always have defied being pop entertainment. In your songs, like his, we know a real person is talking, with lines like, "*You've got a lot of nerve to say you are my friend*."

BD: That's another way of writing a song of course. Just talking to somebody that ain't there That's the best way. That's the truest way. Then it just becomes a question of how heroic your speech is. To me, it's something to strive after.

ST: Until you record a song, no matter how heroic it is, it doesn't really exist. Do you ever feel that.

BD: No. If it's there, it exists.

ST: You once said that you only write about what's true, what's been proven to you, that you write about dreams but not fantasies.

BD: My songs really aren't dreams. They're more of a responsive nature. Waking up from a dream is... when you write a dream, it's something you try to recollect and you're never quite sure if you're getting it right or not.

ST: You said your songs are responsive. Does life have to be in turmoil for songs to come?

BD: Well to me, when you need them, they appear. Your life doesn't have to be in turmoil to write a song like that but you need to be outside of it. That's why a lot of people, me myself included, write songs when one form or another of society has rejected you. So that you can truly write about it from the outside. Someone who's never been out there can only imagine it as anything, really.

ST: Outside of life itself?

BD: No. Outside of the situation you find yourself in.

There are different types of songs and they're all called songs. But there are different types of songs just like there are different types of people, you know? There's an infinite amount of different kinds, stemming from a common folk ballad verse to people who have classical training. And with classical training, of course, then you can just apply lyrics to classical training and get things going on in positions where you've never been in before. Modern twentieth century ears are the first ears to hear these kind of Broadway songs. There wasn't anything like this. These are musical songs. These are done by people who know music first. And then lyrics. To me, Hank Williams is still the best songwriter.

ST: Hank? Better than Woody Guthrie?

BD: That's a good question. Hank Williams never wrote *This Land Is Your Land*. But it's not that shocking for me to think of Hank Williams singing *Pastures of Plenty* or Woody Guthrie singing *Cheatin' Heart*. So in a lot of ways those two writers are similar. As writers. But you mustn't forget that both of these people were performers, too. And that's another thing which separates a person who just writes a song...

People who don't perform but who are so locked into other people who do that, they can sort of feel what that other person would like to say in a song and be able to write those lyrics. Which is a different thing from a performer who needs a song to play on stage year after year.

ST: And you always wrote your songs for your self to sing -

BD: My songs were written with me in mind. In those situations, several people might say, "Do you have a song laying around?" The best songs to me – my best songs -are songs which were written very quickly. Yeah, very, very quickly. Just about as much time as it takes to write it down is about as long as it takes to write it. Other than that, there have

been a lot of ones that haven't made it. They haven't survived. They could. They need to be dragged out, you know, and looked at again, maybe.

ST: You said once that the saddest thing about songwriting is trying to reconnect with an idea you started before, and how hard that is to do.

BD: To me it can't be done. To me, unless I have another writer who's around who might want to finish it... outside of writing with the Traveling Wilburys, my shared experience writing a song with other songwriters is not that great. Of course, unless you find the right person to write with as a partner... [laughs]... **you're awfully lucky if you do, but if you don't, it's really more trouble than it's worth, trying to write something with somebody.**

ST: Your collaborations with Jacques Levy came out pretty great.

BD: We both were pretty much lyricists. Yeah, very panoramic songs because, you know, after one of my lines, one of his lines would come out. Writing with Jacques wasn't difficult. It was trying to just get it down. It just didn't stop. Lyrically. Of course, my melodies are very simple anyway so they're very easy to remember.

ST: With a song like Isis that the two of you, wrote together, did you plot that story out prior to writing the verses?

BD: That was a story that [laughs] **meant something to him. Yeah. It just seemed to take on a life of its own,** [laughs] **as another view of history** [laughs]**. Which there are so many views that don't get told. Of history, anyway. That wasn't one of them. Ancient history, but history nonetheless.**

ST: Was that a story you had in mind before the song was written?

BD: No. With this *Isis* thing, it was *Isis*.... you know, the name sort of rang a bell but not in any kind of vigorous way. So, therefore, it was name-that-tune time. It was anything. The name was familiar. Most people would think they knew it from somewhere. But it seemed like just about any way it wanted to go would have been okay, just as long as it didn't get too close. [laughs]

ST: Too close to what?

BD: [Laughs] **Too close to me or him.**

ST: People have an idea of your songs freely flowing out from you, but that song and many others of yours are so well-crafted; it has an ABAB rhyme scheme which is like something Byron would do, interlocking every line -

BD: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, sure. If you've heard a lot of free verse, William Carlos Williams, e.e. cummings, those kind of people who wrote free verse, your ear is not going to be trained for things to sound that way. Of course, for me it's no secret that all my stuff is rhythmically orientated that way.

Like a Byron line would be something as simple as "*What is it you buy so dear / with your pain and with your fear?*" Now that's a Byron line, but that could have been one of my lines. Up until a certain time, maybe in the twenties, that's the way poetry was. It was that way. It was... simple and easy to remember. And always in rhythm. It had a rhythm whether the music was there or not.

ST: Is rhyming fun for you?

BD: Well it can be, but, you know, it's a game. You know, you sit around... you know, it's more like, it's mentally... mentally... it gives you a thrill. It gives you a thrill to rhyme something you might think, "Well, that's never been rhymed before." But then again, people have taken rhyming now, it doesn't have to be exact anymore. Nobody's going to care if you rhyme 'represent' with 'ferment', you know. Nobody's gonna care.

ST: That was a result of a lot of people of your generation for whom the craft elements of song writing didn't seem to matter as much. But in your songs the craft is always there, along with the poetry and the energy.

BD: My sense of rhyme used to be more involved in my songwriting than it is... Still staying in the unconscious frame of mind, you can pull yourself out and throw up two rhymes first and work it back. You get the rhymes first and work back and then see if you can

make it make sense in another kind of way. You can still stay in the unconscious frame of mind to pull it off, which is the state of mind you have to be in anyway.

ST: So sometimes you will work backwards, like that?

BD: Oh, yeah. Yeah, a lot of times. That's the only way you're going to finish something. That's not uncommon, though.

ST: Do you finish songs even when you feel that maybe they're not keepers?

BD: Keepers or not keepers... you keep songs if you think they're any good, and if you don't... you can always give them to somebody else. If you've got songs that you're not going to do and you just don't like them... show them to other people, if you want.

Then again, it all gets back to the motivation. Why you're doing what you're doing. That's what it is. [Laughs] **It's confrontation with that... goddess of the self. God of the self or goddess of the self? Somebody told me it was goddess of the self. Somebody told me that the goddess rules over the self. Gods don't concern themselves with such earthly matters. Only goddesses... would stoop so low. Or bend down so low.**

ST: You mentioned that when you were writing *Every Grain of Sand* that you felt you were in an area where no one had ever been before -

BD: Yeah. In that area where Keats is. Yeah. That's a good poem set to music.

ST: A beautiful melody.

BD: It's a beautiful melody too, isn't it? It's a folk derivative melody. It's nothing you can put your finger on, but, you know, yeah, those melodies are great. There ain't enough of them, really. Even a song like that, the simplicity of it can be... deceiving. As far as.. a song like that just may have been written in great turmoil, although you would never sense that. Written but not delivered. Some songs are better written in peace and quiet and delivered in turmoil. Others are best written in turmoil and delivered in a peaceful, quiet way.

It's a magical thing, popular song. Trying to press it down into everyday numbers doesn't quite work. It's not a puzzle. There aren't pieces that fit. It doesn't make a complete picture that's ever been seen.

But, you know, as they say, thank God for songwriters.

ST: Randy Newman said that he writes his songs by going to it everyday, like a job -

BD: Tom Paxton told me the same thing. He goes back with me, way back. He told me the same thing. Everyday he gets up and he writes a song. Well that's great, you know, you write the song and then take the kids to school? Come home, have some lunch with the wife, you know, maybe go write another song. Then Tom said for recreation, to get himself loose, he rode his horse. And then pick up his child from school, and then go to bed with his wife. Now to me that sounds like the ideal way to write songs. To me, it couldn't be any better than that.

ST: How do you do it?

BD: Well, my songs aren't written on a schedule like that. In my mind it's never really been seriously a profession... It's been more confessional than professional. Then again, everybody's in it for a different reason.

ST: Do you ever sit down with the intention of writing a song or do you wait for songs to come to you?

BD: Either or. Both ways. It can come... some people are... It's possible now for a songwriter to have a recording studio in his house and record a song and make a demo and do a thing. It's like the roles have changed on all that stuff. Now for me, the environment to write the song is extremely important. The environment has to bring something out in me that wants to be brought out. It's a contemplative, reflective thing... Feelings really aren't my thing. See, I don't write lies.

It's a proven fact: Most people who say I love you don't mean it. Doctors have proved that. So love generates a lot of songs. Probably more so than a lot. Now it's not my intention to have love influence my songs. Any more than it influenced Chuck Berry's songs or Woody Guthrie's or Hank Williams'. Hank Williams, they're not love songs.

You're degrading them songs calling them love songs. Those are songs from the Tree of Life, There's no love on the Tree of Life. Love is on the tree of Knowledge, the tree of Good and Evil. So we have a lot of songs in popular music about love. Who needs them? Not you, not me.

You can use love in a lot of ways in which it will come back to hurt you. Love is a democratic principle. It's a Greek thing.

A college professor told me that if you read about Greece in the history books, you'll know all about America. Nothing that happens will puzzle you ever again. You read the history of Ancient Greece and when the Romans came in, and nothing will ever bother you about America again. You'll see what America is.

Now, maybe but there are a lot of other countries in the world besides America... [laughs]. Two. You can't forget about them [laughter].

ST: Have you found there are better places in the world than others to write songs?

BD: It's not necessary to take a trip to write a song. What a long, strange trip it's been, however But that part of it's true, too.

Environment is very important. People need peaceful, invigorating environments. Stimulating environments.

In America there's a lot of repression. A lot of people who are repressed. They 'd like to get out of town, they just don't know how to do it. And so, it holds back creativity. It's like you go somewhere and you can't help but feel it. Or people even tell it to you, you know?

What got me into the whole thing in the beginning wasn't songwriting. That's not what got me into it. When *Hound Dog* came across the radio, there was nothing in my mind that said, "Wow, what a great song, I wonder who wrote that?" It didn't really concern me who wrote it. It didn't matter who wrote it. It was just, it was just there.

Same way with me now. You hear a good song. Now you think to yourself, maybe, "Who wrote it?" Why? Because the performer's not as good as the song maybe. The performer's got to transcend that song. At least come up to it. A good performer can always make a bad song sound good. Record albums are filled with good performers singing filler stuff. Everybody can say they've done that. Whether you wrote it or whether somebody else wrote it, it doesn't matter. What interested me was being a musician. The singer was important and so was the song. But being a musician was always first and foremost in the back of my mind. That's why, while other people were learning... whatever they were learning. What were they learning way back then?

ST: *Ride, Sally, Ride*!

BD: Something like that. Or *Run, Rudolph, Run*. When the others were doing *Run, Rudolph, Run* my interests were going more to Leadbelly kind of stuff, when he was playing a Stella 12-string guitar. Like, how does the guy do that? Where can one of these be found, a 12-string guitar? They didn't have any in my town. My intellect always fell that way. Of the music. Like Paul Whiteman. Paul Whiteman creates a mood. To me, that creates a mood. Bing Crosby's early records. They created a mood, like that Cab Calloway, kind of spooky horn kind of stuff. Violins, when big bands had a sound to them, without the Broadway glitz. Once that Broadway trip got into it, it became all sparkly and Las Vegas, really. But it wasn't always so.

Music created an environment. It doesn't happen anymore. Why? Maybe technology has just booted it out and there's no need for it. Because we have a screen which supposedly is three-dimensional. Or comes across as three-dimensional. It would like you to believe it's three-dimensional. Well, you know, like old movies and stuff like that that's influenced so many of us who grew up on that stuff. [Picks up Peruvian flute] **Like this old thing here, it's nothing, it's some kind of, what is it?... Listen:** [Plays a slow tune on the flute]. **Here, listen to this song.** [Plays more.] **Okay. That's a song. It don't have any words. Why do songs need words? They don't. Songs don 't need words. They don't.**

ST: Do you feel satisfied with your body of work?

BD: Most everything, yeah.

ST: Do you spend a lot of time writing songs?

BD: Well, did you hear that record that Columbia released last year *Down In The Groove*? Those songs, they came in pretty easy.

ST: I'd like to mention some of your songs, and see what response you have to them.

BD: Okay.

ST: *One More Cup Of Coffee* [from *Desire*].

BD: [Pause] **Was that for a coffee commercial? No.... It's a gypsy song. That song was written during a gypsy festival in the south of France one summer. Somebody took me there to the gypsy high holy days which coincide with my own particular birthday. So somebody took me to a birthday party there once, and hanging out there for a week probably influenced the writing of that song.**

But *The Valley Below* probably came from someplace else.

My feeling about the song was that the verses came from someplace else. It wasn't about anything, so this "valley below" thing became the fixture to hang it on. But "valley below" could mean anything.

ST: *Precious Angel* [from *Slow Train Coming*]

BD: Yeah. That's another one, it could go on forever. There's too many verses and there's not enough. You know? When people ask me, "How come you don't sing that song anymore?" It's like it's another one of those songs: it's just too much and not enough. A lot of my songs strike me that way. That's the natural thing about them to me.

It's too hard to wonder why about them. To me, they're not worthy of wondering why about them. They're songs. They're not written in stone. They're on plastic.

ST: To us though they are written in stone, because Bob Dylan wrote them. I've been amazed by the way you've changed some of your great songs -

BD: Right. Somebody told me that Tennyson often wanted to rewrite his poems once he saw them in print.

ST: *I And I*. [from *Infidels*].

BD: [Pause] **That was one of them Caribbean songs. One year a bunch of songs just came to me hanging around down in the islands, and that was one of them.**

ST: *Joey* [from *Desire*].

BD: To me, that's a great song. Yeah. And it never loses its appeal.

ST: And it has one of the greatest visual endings of any song.

BD: That's a tremendous song. And you'd only know that singing it night after night. You know who got me singing that song? [Jerry] **Garcia. Yeah. He got me singing that song again. He said that's one of the best songs ever written. Coming from him, it was hard to know which way to take that** [Laughs]**. He got me singing that song again with them** [The Grateful Dead]**.**

It was amazing how it would, right from the gate go, it had a life of its own, it just ran out of the gate and it just kept on getting better and better and better and better and it keeps on getting better. It's in its infant stages, as a performance thing. Of course, it's a long song. But, to me, not to blow my own horn, but to me the song is like a Homer ballad. Much more so than *A Hard Rain*, which is a long song too. But, to me, Joey has a Homeric quality to it that you don't hear everyday. Especially in popular music.

ST: *Ring Them Bells*. [From *Oh Mercy*]

BD: It stands up when you hear it played by me. But if another performer did it, you might find that it probably wouldn't have as much to do with bells as what the title proclaims. Somebody once came and sang it in my dressing room. To me [laughs]**. To try to influence me to sing it that night.** [Laughter] **It could have gone either way, you know.**

EM: Which way did it go?

BD: It went right out the door. [Laughter] **It went out the door and didn't come back, listening to this song which was on my record, sung by someone who wanted me to sing it... There was no way he was going to get me to sing it like that. A great performer, too.**

ST: *Idiot Wind* [From *Blood On The Tracks*].

BD: ***Idiot Wind*. Yeah, you know, obviously, if you've heard both versions, you realise, of course, that there could be a myriad of versions for the thing. It doesn't stop. It wouldn't stop. Where do you end? You could still be writing it, really. It's something that could be a work continually in progress.**

Although, on saying that, let me say that my lyrics, in my way of thinking, are better for my songs than anybody else's. People have felt about my songs sometimes the same way as me. And they say to me, your songs are so opaque that, people tell me, they have feelings they'd like to export within the same framework. My response, always, is to go ahead, do it, if you feel like it. But it never comes off. They're not as good as my lyrics. There's just something about my lyrics that just have a gallantry to them. And that might be all they have going for them. [Laughs]**. However, it's no small thing.**

12 June 1991
Eduardo Bueno Interview(?), Budapest, Hungary

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1097-1100.

This interview with Dylan, supposedly conducted by Eduardo Bueno in Budapest on June 12, 1991, was published in the *Telegraph*, Issue 42. It is a fake. Eduardo Bueno summed it up pretty well himself in a letter to the *Telegraph*, reprinted in No. 44:

A brief synopsis:

During Dylan's concerts in Brazil (Jan 1990), Bueno wrote a first-hand account of the tour for Brazilian periodical *O Estado de Sao Paulo*. He made it "clear... that I had never talked to Bob Dylan himself." When the article appeared (Feb 12, 1990), Bueno found it considerably changed. To quote Bueno:

> "The reporter (Luis Andre Fonseca) had rewritten everything, invented several of the stories, printed fake names... and worst of all, had put a lot of words into Dylan's own mouth. And he published it under my name."

Bueno threatened to sue the paper, the reporter was fired, the paper printed an apology... end of story?

No, because in Aug 1991, another fake interview was published in Eduardo Bueno's name in *Zero Hora*, Porto Alegre, Brazil:

> "Dylan was playing shows in Brazil again and someone who said he was from *O Estado* offered *Zero Hora* 'an exclusive interview with Bob Dylan done by Eduardo Bueno, in Budapest', where Dylan had, in fact, recently played... Everything... was well researched: the name of the hotel, the name of the stadium where Dylan played, and so on. I have my suspects but I've been unable to prove anything against anyone..."

At Bueno's instigation, *Zero Hora* published a retraction with apologies. In writing about Dylan's concert at Porto Alegre that year, Bueno had another "opportunity to tell the readers that the 'Budapest interview' had never taken place."

Bueno further couldn't understand how this fake could wind up inside the *Telegraph* because "it isn't difficult to spot that most of Dylan's answers had obviously been taken from previous interviews."

The interview, as it appeared in the *Telegraph*, follows:

ANGELS, VAMPIRES, THE BIBLE, MICK JAGGER,
THE NEW HAT, AND THE ILL-FATED GIG IN TRANSYLVANIA

Budapest: Wednesday, June 12, 1991. On the terrace of his suite at the Buda Penta Hotel, overlooking the lovely district of Castelo, the oldest part of the city of Buda, and the River Danube, Bob Dylan spoke to Eduardo Bueno about... well, all sorts of things, really. The interview was printed in the Brazilian magazine, *Caderno 2*, on June 20, 1991, under the title "*Bob Dylan Breaks His Five- Year Silence*".

EB: When this tour began, back in Italy, everything seemed a bit tense. Yugoslavia, the first Eastern European country you've played in your 30-year career, is also going through pretty tense times right now. What do you think of what's been happening in Europe in the last couple of years?

BD: You're saying that you thought that the tour began in a tense sort of way?

EB: Well, a little bit. Don't you think so?

BD: Uhmmm...

ED: Well, anyway, what do you think about what's happening in Eastern Europe now that you're here for the first time

BD: I've been here before, in 1978 or '79, on holiday... Do you know anything about the history of Central or Eastern Europe?

EB: A little.

BD: Well, then you must know that these countries don't have a really solid national unity. More important than that, they don't have an ethnic unity. These countries are countries that were created, invented. They're not organic. They were sort of toys on the big nation's tables. So what's happening now is simply a return to the natural order of things.

EB: Are you in favor of separatist movements?

BD: I'm not really interested in governments or countries. I think that the individual, the man alone, just him, the single being, is what really matters. I'm in favor of the absolute freedom of the individual. I think that politics is the devil's instrument. Politics kills. Politics is dirty. Politics is corrupt. I mean, everybody knows that.

EB: The best government is the one which doesn't govern...

BD: Yes. Thoreau was always right about that... Is this what you wanted to talk to me about?

EB: No, I wanted to talk about angels.

BD: Angels?

EB: Yes. In an interview you did with Sam Shepard in *Esquire* magazine, he asked you what were your thoughts about angels and you didn't finish giving him an answer because the telephone rang and you went to answer it and when you came back, the subject was changed.

BD: Well, The Bible says that angels exist.

EB: That's exactly what you said before. But do you believe in angels?

BD: Of course. I believe in everything that The Bible says... and according to The Bible, there are five angels for each human being.

EB: Do you read The Bible a lot?

BD: Yes.

EB: All the time?

BD: Always.

EB: Which are your favorite books in The Bible?

BD: Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

EB: What do you think about the Apocalypse?

BD: It will not be by water, but by fire next time. It's what is written.

EB: Which edition of The Bible do you read?

BD: King James's version.

EB: That's not really a Fundamentalist version of The Bible, is it?

BD: I've never been Fundamentalist. I've never been Born Again. Those are just labels that people hang on you. They mean just about as much as Folk Singer, Protest Singer, Rock Star. That's to say that they don't mean anything at all.

EB: I heard you wanted to go to Transylvania in Romania, to the area where Bram Stoker was inspired to write Dracula.

BD: Yes, but the trip was cancelled, or maybe just postponed.

EB: It was here in Budapest that Bela Lugosi was born – the greatest movie Dracula. Did you know that he died shouting, "I'm immortal! I'm King of the Vampires!"?

BD: I think he was Dracula incarnate.

EB: Do you believe in vampires?

BD: Sure. The world is run by vampires. Wherever you go, there are vampires. The music business is controlled basically by vampires.

EB: How is your relationship with the music business, with your record company and so on?

BD: Well, my business is to write songs, to make records and to play shows here and there. Basically, that's it. I'm not very interested in what the men who run the record companies, or the producers, or the music publishers have to say to me. None of them has ever told me anything interesting in the last 25 years. Last year, the vice-president of my record label told me that *Oh Mercy* didn't sell many copies because the record's title didn't mean anything. Well, it meant something to me! After that, somehow I felt all the more determined to make my records the way that I like to make them. But none of my records sell very many copies, do they?

EB: What records are you listening to nowadays?

BD: Hey, you know, I can't understand why there are so many new records. There are thousands of new records every week, and most of them mean absolutely nothing. I don't want to sound too conservative, you know what I mean, but there are already enough good old records. Nobody needs new records that don't do anything new.

EB: In Brazil, your tour manager told me that you only listened to old things – Bill Monroe, things like that.

BD: That's true. That's what I listen to the most: Bill Monroe, Hank Williams, Big Mama Thornton, Jean Ritchie, Blind Willie McTell, rural blues, country blues. But I like rap too. I listen to rap a lot. I hear a bit of dance music sometimes. My sons and daughters like it. One of them's a big Guns n' Roses fan.

EB: You know, when you sang *Knocking On Heaven's Door* in Ljubjana and Belgrade, I had the feeling that the audiences in the East were much more connected with the spirit of the song than Western audiences, who probably now associate that song with Guns n' Roses.

BD: Guns n' Roses are OK. Slash is OK. But there's something about their version of that song that reminds me of the movie *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*. I always wonder who's been transformed into some sort of a clone, and who's stayed true to himself. And I never seem to have an answer.

EB: In Portuguese, the title of that movie is *Soul's Vampires*.

BD: Great title.

EB: On your 50th birthday, an English newspaper, *The Independent*, asked a lot of people what they'd give you as a birthday present. Mick Jagger said, After what I saw on the Grammys, a new hat and some good songs.

BD: Well, a new hat I've already got. It's here. It's called a Borsalino. I bought it in Milan, five days ago, for $75. New songs? Well, I don't think he's ever written a song like *Masters Of War*. But to do my show, I don't need to be moving from here and there. But I love Mick, I always did.

EB: Your tour to Brazil was postponed from June to August. Some of the newspapers said you were frightened of the cholera epidemic.

BD: Did they say that? Well, I think you know better than me what newspapers are like.

EB: What did you think of Brazil?

BD: Well, I'd been there before. I don't really want to say too much about it, but... a few sewers wouldn't do the country any harm. That'd help with the cholera too... I think we've already talked more than enough, don't you think so?

EB: One last question, then. What are your plans for the future?

BD: Oh... I generally don't even know what I'm doing next week. Well, I know now, today. I guess my plans are to go on writing, recording and performing live. My life's been pretty much like this for as long as I can remember. To tell you the truth, I think that my life is

getting better all the time. I think that the older you are, the better you get. So I'm gonna keep on for a long time. If you come see me when I'm 90 years old, you'll find me on a stage some place.

13 August 1991
Porto Alegre Interview, Brazil

Source: *The Telegraph*, #41 (Winter 41), pp. 83-85.

Next stop Porto Alegre, Brazil. Here Dylan played before a large audience (around 30,000) in environmentally hostile conditions. There were no surprises this time around, but local journalists did manage to get a short interview with him – he talked to them two at a time giving them five minutes each. What follows are extracts from the interviews as printed in the local rag. It's not riveting but few of you may have the chance to read it elsewhere. Bear in mind that we've had to translate it.

PORTO ALEGRE INTERVIEW – August 13, 1991

Q: Do you think that your public see you as a kind of prophet, as a musician with messages?

BD: No, people never see me in that way.

Q: How would you define Bob Dylan's kind of rock music?

BD: However you prefer. It is what it is, you know. It is "guitar music", violin, flute...

Q: Taking a trip down memory lane, what are the most significant moments in your career?

BD: I don't look back.

Q: How do you see the new arrangements you make of the old hits?

BD: It's the same music, the same words, the same ideas.

Q: This is the second time you've come to Brazil. Have you had the opportunity of getting to know anything about the work of Brazilian musicians?

BD: A little bit.

Q: Do you like anything in today's pop or rock?

BD: I don't like anything special. I like Elvis Presley and Dean Martin.

Q: But when people include you in this classification, does that bother you? Sometimes. Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't.

BD: Do you usually compose when you are on a tour? Yes.

Q: Are you composing something now during your Brazilian tour?

BD: Yes, maybe Brazil will inspire me with a new song.

Q: Are you going to be playing any songs from your last album, *Under The Red Sky*?

BD: Maybe.

Q: Did you like the way *Under The Red Sky* turned out?

BD: Hum... Some albums, you know... It was OK. It could have been better.

Q: Do you ever think it would be a good idea to do new things, to follow new ways, to make a different kind of music?

BD: No, I don't think so. The best thing is to continue in the same way.

Q: Do you still listen to Leadbelly or Woody Guthrie's folk music?

BD: Yes.

Q: Do you think that that kind of music, prison or plantation songs, makes any sense in today's global village?

BD: Yes, it still does.

Q: What kind of music do you listen to when you are at home?

BD: Hum... every kind of music.

Q: What do you think of Brazil?

BD: People are friendly. They're not quick. They got things to say.

Q: Are you interested in politics?

BD: No, I'm not very interested in that stuff.

15 September 1991
Chabad Telethon, KCOP-TV Studios, Hollywood, California

Source: *Circulating tape.*

BD: What do you want me to say?
XX: Tell 'em to give back the books!
BD: Oh yeah, give back the books. Ah, and give plenty of money to Chabad, it's my favorite organization in the whole world, really. They do nothing but good things with all the money. The more you can give, the more it's gonna help everybody.

XX: I think the people out there… Millions of people that are watching us, they heard us talk about the cry of these books. And these are books that have suffered for 70 years behind those bars of the Lenin Library. Mr Gorbachev said he was gonna give them back, Mr Yeltsin says he is gonna give them back, everyone say they're gonna give them back. Bob, tell them to give it back.
BD: Yeah, give it back. Give the books back.
XX: If Bob Dylan says to give it back, then give it back!

XX: Bob tell them what to do!
BD: Call and call and call some more until you get somebody to answer and give what you can. Thanks for inviting me down here.
XX: God bless you, Bob. Happy New Year.

20 November 1991
Dylan on Buddy Rich's biography, Chicago Sun-Times, LA, CA

Source: *Chicago Sun-Times (LA Times)*, p. 44

Bob Dylan has 'Rich' plans

HOLLYWOOD Bob Dylan wants to make a movie about a musician, but it's not about any of the music figures who have been associated with him. The musician? The late jazz drummer Buddy Rich.

"Ever see Buddy Rich?" Dylan asked during an interview. **"To me, he was the essence of rhythm – and he** (led) **an interesting life."** Dylan's not thinking about playing Rich. But he has obtained rights to a Rich biography.

February 1992
Robert Hilburn Interview, On U.S. Tour

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 757-767.

This interview by Robert Hilburn was published in *The Los Angeles Times Magazine* on February 9th 1992. It was also syndicated and appeared in various newspapers across the U.S. (*The News & Observer*, Raleigh, N.C., Saturday, Feb 15, 1992 – being one in many collectors hands), U.K. (*Guardian*, February 13th 1992) and elsewhere. None of the syndicated versions seems to have anything over and above that published in the *L.A. Times* article printed below, in fact, these are generally scaled-down versions.

Hilburn actually joined Dylan and the crew on board the tour bus one night during part of the Mid-West Concert Tour.

WHAT BECOMES A LEGEND MOST? A NEVER-ENDING TOUR,
A NEW AUDIENCE AND KEEPING THE MYSTERY ALIVE.

Bob Dylan stares idly at the paperback book that someone has brought aboard his custom tour bus, which is speeding through the snowy Wisconsin countryside in the midnight hour. He has just finished a concert in Madison and is now on this way to South Bend, Ind., where he'll play again in 20 hours.

The shiny, 278-page book, titled "*Tangled Up In Tapes Revisited*," is an exhaustive chronicle of the last half of Dylan's 32-year career and a testimony to the public's continuing obsession with the most influential songwriter of the rock era. The book lists every song Dylan has sung – and in what order – at most of his concerts from 1974 to 1989.

If the book's contents reveal every detail of his recent performing career, the color portrait on the cover – an expressionless Robert Allen Zimmerman, circa the late '80s, eyes concealed by dark glasses – is a teasing reminder of everything else Dylan has kept hidden these many years. Like the man himself, the drawing gives away almost nothing.

On the bus this night, the real Dylan, who has placed his own dark glasses on the table in front of him, flips quickly through the book. He's sitting in the dining nook and shows more interest in when the coffee will be ready than in the book.

Other performers might be curious enough to look back on, say, an earlier show they played in Wisconsin. (For example, from Page 164: On Nov. 1, 1978, at the Dane County Memorial Coliseum, Dylan sang 27 songs, opening with "*She's Love Crazy*" and "*Mr. Tambourine Man*" closing with "*Forever Young*" and "*Changing of the Guards*") Or maybe a more recent one along the same highway, 11 years later. (Page 209: July 2, 1989, at the Marcus Amphitheater in Milwaukee; 17 songs, starting with "*Early Morning Rain*" and ending with "*Maggie's Farm*".)

Dylan finally just hands the book back to the man who brought it aboard the bus.

Told he is welcome to keep it as a souvenir, Dylan says, **"Naw, I've already been all those places and done all those things."**

Then he pauses slightly and adds, with a trace of a smile, **"Now if you ever find a book out there that's going to tell me where I'm going, I might be interested."**

BOB DYLAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN A POP OUTSIDER, AND THERE ARE a few signs, as he enters his sixth decade, that he is surrendering his independence. When he first appeared in the folk clubs of New York's Greenwich Village in the early 1960s, there was an element of choirboy innocence – and mischief- in the smoothness of his cheeks and the gentleness of his smile. He not only taught rock n' roll to think during that decade but he also showed a stubborn refusal to play by anyone else's rules.

Today, Dylan can still disarm you with a sudden smile, but there is weariness in the eyes. It's the instinctive suspicion of a survivor who knows, after years of public scrutiny, the dangers of letting down his guard.

On May 24, 1991, Dylan turned 50, and the media thought it would be ideal time to try to put this cultural hero – and puzzle – into perspective. But he refused more than 300 requests for interviews, agreeing only to a brief telephone Q&A that ended up in *Spy* magazine, another in a journal published by the National Academy of Songwriters and a radio interview syndicated by *Westwood One*.

Instead, he hit the road, in your tour of what Dylan-watchers now call the "Never-Ending Tour" – an ongoing road show that to date has racked up 450 performances and been seen by about 3 million fans in the United States, Europe and South America. By design, the tour has avoided the usual media glare. Dylan has concentrated on smaller venues and turned his back on the sort of superstar hoopla that would put him in a national spotlight. Madison was one of the final stops on a trek last year that took him from Burlington, Vt, to Zurich, Switzerland.

A notable exception to his low-profile stance during his 50th-birthday year was the infamous Grammy Awards appearance in New York City last February. During the '60s, a conservative pop Establishment declined to honor the prolific Dylan with a Grammy. The ice broke a bit in 1979, when Dylan won the Best Male Rock Vocal award for his song, *Gotta Serve Somebody*. At the 1991 awards ceremony, a new generation of directors of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences tried to make up for the years of slight with a Lifetime Achievement award. Instead of a mellow Dylan, caught up with the sentimentality of the occasion, taking the stage, he remained an outsider.

Exhausted after a flight from Europe and suffering from the flu, he looked disheveled and distracted. And on a night when most of the country was caught up in the fervor and patriotism of the month-old Persian Gulf War, he and his band launched into a blistering if all but unintelligible version of "*Masters of War*":

Come you masters of war
You that build all the guns
You that build the death planes
You that build the big bombs
You that hide behind walls
You that hide behind desks
I just want you to know
I can see through your masks

It was classic Dylan – enigmatic and provocative. Fans and reporters asked themselves what had happened. There were whispers about drugs or drinking. But Dylan remained outside of the controversy: no apologies made, no answers offered.

For much of his career, Dylan's reluctance to explain himself or his actions seemed to be a strategy to heighten interest in his legend. Now, on the bus to South Bend, with a reporter allowed along for the ride, he sounds genuinely uninterested in his own notoriety. He wants no part of the confessional talk that fuels most celebrity interviews. Most of all, he has no patience with dissections of his famous past.

"Nostalgia," he says sharply, **"is death."**

As he gazes across the tour bus table, Dylan even smiles wickedly as the reporter suggests the hackneyed headlines that editors might have tacked on the birthday retrospectives that never appeared:

"Mr. Tambourine Man Turned 50!"

"Bringing It All Back Home."

Or – and this suggestion draws a full-scale laugh – "Knockin' on Heaven's Door."

There's no hostility in his manner, but he fences instinctively, warding off certain questions. He listens to – and ignores – one after another until one catches his interest. He dismisses old-days inquiries as **"ancient history"** and counters a query about his personal life with, **"Do people ask Paul Simon questions like that?"** Like a lot of artists, he feels that his work expresses all that people need to know about him.

"It wasn't me who called myself a legend," he says sternly and suddenly in response to a question about his revered place in work. **"It was thrown at me by editors in the media who wanted to play around with me or have something to tell their readers. But it stuck."**

"It was important for me to come to the bottom of this legend thing, which has no reality at all. What's important isn't the legend, but the art, the work. A person has to do whatever they are called on to do. If you try to act a legend, it's nothing but hype."

But isn't it flattering that critics and artists have pointed to him as rock's most important songwriter? He just shakes his head.

"Not really," he continues, more softly. **"Genius? There's a real line between genius and insanity. Anybody will tell you that."**

CHICAGO'S AMBASSADOR, EAST ON THE HISTORIC AND TONY GOLD Coast, is one of the city's grand old hotels, the home of the Pump Room restaurant where everyone from gangsters (Al Capone) to Presidents (Nixon and Reagan) have dined. The hotel also has its share of showbiz ties. Alfred Hitchcock shot scenes with Cary Grant here in the late '50s for "North by Northwest" and Led Zeppelin caused a stir in 1977 by throwing a couch out of an 11th-floor window.

On the Never-Ending Tour, Dylan does a lot of sleeping on one of two tour buses as they eat up the miles between concert cities. But today, Dylan has unobtrusively checked into the Ambassador, which is a short drive from the Evanston campus of Northwestern University, where he is scheduled to perform at 9 p.m.

It was in Chicago in 1974 that Dylan, with the Band in tow, returned to live performing after an eight-year hiatus prompted by a reported motorcycle accident in 1966 and his subsequent

desire to spend more time with his family. The atmosphere then, however, was dramatically different.

About 6 million mail orders were received for tickets to the tour's 40 shows. The city was abuzz with reporters from around the world, all seeking an exclusive interview, and with scores of fans hoping for private audiences with the man frequently referred to as the "spokesman for his generation," Dylan's hotel at that time was on alert – security had been warned about Dylan-seekers – fans with a "glazed look" in their eyes.

Today, the midafternoon atmosphere at the Ambassador East is relaxed – just the usual flow of guests, most of them in town on business. Dylan is upstairs in his room, relaxing until the bus picks him up around 7 p. m. for the ride to Northwestern McGaw Hall, a basketball gym-cum-auditorium. Tonight he'll play for about 3,500 fans, a crowd a little more than a fifth the size of the one that gathered at Chicago Stadium in 1974. But these small halls are his choice; he prefers the intimacy and audience rapport they provide.

By the time he has driven over freezing streets to the concert site, a heavily bundled crowd is filling into the hall. As they unwrap their mufflers and take off their hats, another contrast between then and now is made clear. Until the mid-'80s, Dylan played chiefly to fans from his own generation. How he performs to mostly college-age audiences, young people who weren't even alive when "*Blowin' in the Wind*," recorded by Peter, Paul and Mary, hit No. 2 in 1963, fans who see him less as a superstar or personal savior than as a gifted artist, an American icon.

Kevin Martell is 20 years old and seeing Dylan for the first time. He and two friends sit quietly in the hall waiting for the show to begin, displaying none of the raucous exuberance usually found at rock shows. When he talks about why he wanted to see the show, he sounds a bit like he's signed up to hear an honored novelist or historian deliver a lecture.

"There are a few bands today, like U2, that talk about real issues," he says. "But I think the '60s artists were the ones who were really into it, and Dylan is one of the few you can still see. I think songs like '*Masters of War*' are as important today as when he wrote it. He's like a legend."

A few rows away, Robert Blackmon, 19, a chemical engineering student, can reel off a long list of his favorite new bands – including Jane's Addiction, Nirvana and Primus – that he feels speak directly to the frustrations and aspirations of his generation. But, like Martell, he sees Dylan from a broader perspective: "He has a timeless, universal quality," Blackmon says.

The band walk out on stage first, a three-man group made up of guitarist John Jackson, bassist Tony Gamier and drummer Ian Wallace – veterans whose collective resume range from Asleep at the Wheel, the lighthearted Western swing band, to King Crimson, the arty veteran British rock group. They've been on the road with him now for more than a year.

There is a charge of electricity as the houselights dim. Without a word of greeting, Dylan, in a black shirt and striped black pants, steps to the microphone. With a quick glance back at the band, he starts to play. The lighting is so dim that it's hard to make out his features, but his familiar raspy voice is unmistakable.

Dylan seemed at times in the '70s and early '80s to be fighting his way through concerts -stiff and largely motionless as he faced challenging audiences that often complained about anything in his song selection or arrangements that didn't conform to their expectations. But now, in his introverted way, he enjoys the interaction with the audience. He's comfortable enough on stage to move a bit, and there's an occasional trace of playfulness in his eyes. And there's no rush to

get it all over with – the instrumental interludes between verses get more of an airing-out than in the past.

Over the next 90 minutes, he runs through songs from the ‘60s, 70s and 80s – love songs and social commentaries, mostly his own songs and some by other writers. Dylan surprises the older fans early in the set by gliding in to a tender, shields-down rendition of Nat King Cole’s pop ballad “*Answer Me, My Love*.” He stands stock-still, his head slightly tilted as if to recall the emotion that the song triggered the first time he heard it. Later, looking like a young rock upstart in a Memphis roadhouse, he bobs and weaves to kick off a spirited version of Johnny Cash’s old “*Folsom Prison Blues*.” The band supports Dylan with a frisky, rockabilly-and-blues-accented sound.

At first, the audience simply watches politely. It takes Dylan’s old “All Along the Watchtower” a song that the younger listeners may best recognize from a recent recording by U2, to get them moving. By the end of the set, hundreds have raced to the edge of the stage, moving in time with the music.

Dylan looks down at the crowd briefly, seems pleased and just keeps playing. As usual, he has said little during the entire concert beyond an occasional **“thank you.”** No introductions, no eye contact, no chitchat. The show ends and there’s a tremendous burst of applause when Dylan returned for a quick two-song encore. Then he bows slightly toward the audience, turns abruptly and heads offstage, directly into the chill of the night and onto the bus – no post-show handshaking or small talk. His only question to his aids: **“How was the sound out there?”**

When the bus arrives around midnight at the entrance of the Ambassador East, the band members file off, heading for their rooms. But Dylan stands on State Street, shifting his weight back and forth in the cold and staring into the distance. He wants to stop in at a blues club in the neighborhood for a while and then get some dinner.

After an hour of blues, Dylan, his bodyguard and a tour aide end up in a nondescript diner a few blocks from the hotel. Sipping at a bowl of soup, Dylan says he likes the mandolin riff in R.E.M.‘s “*Losing My Religion*” which is playing on the radio. He listens to a run-through of comments from the new generation that filled the seats the (sic) Northwestern show.

“Older people – my age – don’t come out anymore,” he says. **“A lot of the shows over the years was people coming out of curiosity and their curiosity wasn’t fulfilled. They weren’t transported back to the ‘60s. Lightning didn’t strike.”**

“The shows didn’t make sense for them, and they didn’t make sense for me. That had to stop, and it took a long time to stop it. A lot of people were coming out to see The Legend, and I was trying to just get on stage and play music.”

He shifts relentlessly in the chair. The brightly lit room is almost empty, and no one recognises him at first. After a few minutes, however, the diner manager and a customer at the other end of the table start huddling and looking his way. Dylan doesn’t notice. He’s still thinking about the comments of the students and their interest in the ‘60s.

“A lot of people say the ‘60s generation didn’t turn out well – that they didn’t live up to their dreams or follow through or whatever – and they may be right. But there was still a lot that no one else has been able to do,” he says firmly.

“People today are still living off the table scraps of the ‘60s. They are still being passed around – the music, the ideas.”

"Look at what's going on today: There used to be a time when the idea of heroes was important. People grew up sharing those myths and legends and ideals. Now they grow up sharing McDonald's and Disneyland."

When Dylan and his party leave the diner half an hour later, the manager approaches the singer at the cash register and asks for a photo or an autograph. **"Maybe tomorrow or something, OK,"** he says, not very convincingly. But he doesn't want to be rude. Just before he walks out, he shakes the manager's hand.

Back at the hotel, Dylan passes at the entrance to the Pump Room and stares down at some of the hundreds of celebrity photos on the wall. He moves slowly down the hallway as his aide and his bodyguard point to faces they recognize – Frank Sinatra, Cary Grant, Marilyn Monroe, even David Bowie and Mick Jagger. Dylan's picture is not on the wall.

He stares briefly at a photo of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, but then loses interest. It's 2:30 by now, and the outsider heads towards the elevator.

THE NEXT NIGHT, DYLAN PACES IMPATIENTLY BACKSTAGE AT THE Dane Country Memorial Coliseum in Madison. A snowstorm had snarled traffic, and it has taken Dylan's bus four hours instead of two to get here from Chicago. He seems anxious to get the whole evening over with. Finally he goes back to the bus to wait out the opening act.

On stage, instead of the relaxed mood he brought to the concert at Northwestern, he struggles for inspiration. The audience cheers as much as the fans at Northwestern, but Dylan's vocals – on the very same songs – lack the emotional edge of the previous show. The exception is the ballad "*I Believe in You*":

They ask me how I feel
And if my love is real
And how I know I'll make it through
They look at me and frown
They live to drive me from this town
They don't want me around
'Cause I believe in you.

It's a nakedly personal song, a reflection on the isolation of an outsider's life, and the tension in Dylan's performance emphasizes in poignancy.

Despite a standing ovation at the end of the concert, Dylan can't seem to wait until he is on his way to the next town. He again walks directly from the stage to the bus. The heater is on but he sits bundled up in a rumpled sweat shirt and jacket at a small table in the front compartment. Across the isle, in the TV-lounge area, the band members are laughing as they listen to a bootleg tape of Buddy Rich. On the tape, the great jazz drummer is delivering a tongue-lashing to his band. Dylan, who plans to produce a movie of the late drummer's life, has heard the tape before and his mind is elsewhere.

"That was a useless gig," he says flatly.

When someone mentions that the audience seemed to enjoy it, he waves his hand. **"Naw, it just wasn't. Nothin' wrong with the audience. Sometimes the energy level just doesn't happen the way it should. We didn't invite this weather to follow us around."**

He lapses into silence.

The night before, after the Northwestern show, he had been more talkative, and more philosophical about the ups and downs of touring. **"You hear sometimes about the glamour of the road,"** he said then, **"but you get over that real fast. There are a lot of times that it's no different from going to work in the morning. Still, you're either a player or you're not a player. It didn't really occur to me until we did those shows with the Grateful Dead** [in 1987]**. If you just go out every three years or so, like I was doing for a while, that's when you lose touch. If you are going to be a performer, you've got to give it your all."**

At the blues club in Chicago, he had let his guard down – briefly – when an old friend, who had heard that Dylan was in town, tracked him down. The tour bodyguard braced as a middle-aged man in a business suit walked up to Dylan and put his arm around him. But the smile on Dylan's face said that it was OK. The man's name was Arnie, and he had gone to high school with Dylan in Hibbing, Minn.

Dylan sat bemused while Arnie regaled the reporter with tales. "Back in English class," Arnie confided, "Bob wrote me a note: 'Arnie, I'm going to make it big. I know it for sure, and when I do, you bring this piece of paper and for two months you can stay with me, no matter where I am. ' I still have it at home."

Dylan laughed easily.

"You know, I took off and joined the Navy and Bob went down to the University of Minnesota and the next thing I know, he's got this record out." Arnie continued. "I've got some of his albums at home and some picture books of his life story. The song I like best is '*Slow Train*' – that and '*Lay, Lady, Lay*'"

Dylan stepped in only when the reporter asked Arnie his last name. **"Naw,"** he said protectively, **"don't drag him into all this."**

Tonight on the bus, just out of Madison, Dylan is much less at ease. He looks like a street person – as drained as he appeared on last year's Grammy telecast, as he waits for someone to bring him whisky and coffee, trying to separate himself from the frustrations of the night.

When the band members retire to their bunks in the back of the bus, Dylan begins to loosen up a bit. Still, with no Arnie to make the revelations, Dylan keeps the veil tightly drawn around his personal life. Any talk about his former, 13-year marriage to Sara Lowndes, or their four now-grown children is strictly off-limits. So is his longstanding relationship with Carole Childs, an Elektra Records artists and repertoire executive.

The music, however, is not off-limits. He is intrigued by a comparison between the message of "*I Believe in You*" and the speech he had delivered at the Grammy Awards. **"It's possible to be so defiled in this world that your own mother and father will abandon you,"** he had said that night. **"And if this happens, God will always believe in your ability to mend your own ways."**

When the reporter tells him that the song and speech both seemed to be about the need to be true to one's own beliefs, Dylan responds easily. **"That song is just about overcoming hardship,"** he volunteers. **"Songs are mostly personal – something happens in your life or flashes through and then it's gone, and sometime it's a song and sometimes it's just lose. Sometimes things works (sic), sometimes they don't."**

These days, he says, they don't more often than they do. At one point in the conversation, he pulls out a notebook from his jacket and starts scribbling. **"It's a song I'm workin' on,"** he offers, and than adds: **"Part of the secret of being a songwriter is to have an audacious attitude. There was a time when the songs would come three or four at the same time, but those days are long gone."**

It's a delicate topic, but Dylan continues.

"Once in a while, the odd song will come to me like a bulldog at the garden gate and demand to be written. But most of them are rejected out of my mind right away. You get caught up in wondering if anyone really needs to hear it. Maybe a person gets to the point where they have written enough songs. Let someone else write them." Still, he writes enough for a new album every couple of years, and some – including 1989's "*Oh Mercy*" – are widely acclaimed.

He shrugs at the mention of all the "new Dylans" who have been touted over the years - displaying a rare flash of pride.

"That's never been a worry," he says. **"There wasn't anybody doing my thing – though I'm not saying it was all that great. It was just mine and no one was going to cover that territory. No one frames language with that same sense of rhyme. It's my thing, just like no one writes a sad song like Hank Williams or no one writes a bitter song like Willie Nelson. My thing is the forming of the lines."**

Dylan is loose now. He's not letting the questions go unanswered. He could easily say he is tired and call an end to the discussion. But he is leaning back on the seat, involved in the conversation rather than fencing. Like most songwriters, he doesn't like to dissect his material, but he agrees to give his opinion about some of the reporter's favorite Dylan songs.

He nods when "*Every Grain of Sand*" is mentioned.

"That's an excellent song, very painless song to write," he says without hesitation. **"It took like 12 seconds – or that's how it felt."**

He doesn't seem as enthusiastic at the mention of "*Tangled Up in Blue*" one of his most-performed post-'60s songs. **"I always thought it was written too fast, too rushed. Sometime that happens in a song – just too many lines, as if I were racing to get from here to there."**

Dylan nods again at the mention of "*Just Like a Woman*."

"That's a hard song to pin down," he says. **"It's another one of those that you can sing a thousand times and still ask what is it about, but you know there's a real feeling there."**

Dylan pauses, as if suddenly self-conscious.

"I'm not trying to say any of these are great songs – that they'd be high up on a list of all the songs ever written."

His answers are becoming increasingly short at the mention of other, older songs, but he does commend on the large number of love songs on the critic's list as opposed to the political songs that earned him his greatest fame in the '60s.

"They call a lot of my songs political songs, but they never really were about politicians," Dylan says, lighting a cigarette. **"The politicians didn't make a difference. It's the businessmen behind them."**

Dylan smiles, then adds: **"'*All Along the Watchtower*' may be my** [only] **political song,"** apparently referring to the line in the song: "*Businessmen, they drink my wine, plowmen dig my earth / None of them along the line know what any of it is worth.*"

It's well past 1 o'clock when the driver announces that the bus is approaching Chicago, about a third of the way to South Bend, and the conversation has switched to Hollywood's fascination with rock n' roll. Given his role in the culture of the '60s, it seems probable that some filmmaker would want to use his story to explain America in the '60s.

Would he welcome such a film?

"Absolutely not," he says, almost contemptuously. **"No one knows too much about** [my life]**, so it's going to have to all be speculation. Who was it that said it: Fame is a curse. There's a lot of truth in that."**

Looking through the side windows at the lights on the outskirts of Chicago, he adds: **"Look at Elvis – he's bigger now than when he was living. He lives on in people's mind** (sic)**. But you wonder if people are remembering the right things about his music, rather than all the stuff that people wrote about him."**

WHEN THE TOUR BUS stops to let the reporter off at a motel near O'Hare International Airport, Dylan says he wants a cup of fresh coffee. One would assume that somebody would go and get it for him. Instead, Dylan walks into an all-night diner and sits at the counter with a tour aide. He's unnoticed amid a handful of truckers and motorists taking a break from the icy highway. It's a bleak scene, worthy of an Edward Hopper painting, and seeing Dylan as part of it suggests, at least momentarily, a clear image of faded glory.

Not everyone at 50 maintains the pace of the Never-Ending Tour, he'll do about 120 shows this year. **"That may not sound like a lot,"** he says, **"Willie** [Nelson] **and B. B. King do a lot more, but it's a comfortable number for me."** He also says that he reserves the right to halt the tour at any time. **"Whenever it does start feeling like work, that's when I want to stop,"** he says. **"Get away from it for a while. You don't want to be a prisoner of this** [touring] **any more than you want to be a prisoner of anything in life if you can avoid it."**

But for now, the road is his choice and he seems grateful for the chance, after all these years, to be able to move about the world at his own pace, freed somewhat from the prison of his '60s mantle.

In the last analysis, the reasons for Dylan's cultural impact are as much a puzzle to the enigmatic performer as they are to others.

"There's no one to my knowledge that isn't surprised by their longevity, including myself," Dylan said wearily, wiping the sleep from his eyes as the bus made its way from concert to concert. **"But it's very dangerous to plan** [far ahead]**, because you are just dealing with your vanity. Tomorrow is hard enough. It's God who gives you the freedom, and the days you should be most concerned with are today and tomorrow."**

"It's one thing to say, 'There's a new record out and people are responding to the new songs,' which is encouraging. But that's not the case. There's no new album, and it's hard for me to

know just what that means, why people come out and what they are looking for or listening for... Maybe the same things I was looking for when I wrote them."

13 March 1992
Stuart Coupe telephone interview

Source: *Time Off*, #560, 27 March 1992;
reprinted in *Homer, the slut* #7

THE COWBOY ANGEL RIDES AGAIN

At the age of 50 he is arguably the most significant rock musician of the last 30 years. With 21 certified Gold albums, the writer of some of the best known songs of the last century is, by any assessment, phenomenally wealthy and has no need to be on the road.

So why has Bob Dylan spent the last four years subjecting himself to the most punishing touring schedule of his entire career? Why, in most cases, does he insist on playing multiple nights at small venues instead of playing to the same number of people in one night at a large theatre? For the latter we should be thankful, whilst the former raises interesting questions about Dylan's motivations.

Since June 1988 Dylan has played an average 125 concerts per year on what even he is now referring to as The Never-Ending Tour. Along with constant touring throughout North America he's traversed the planet, playing in many countries for the first time in his career. There have been concerts in such diverse locations as Iceland, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Greece, Turkey, Hungary and Yugoslavia. Finally the Never-Ending Tour has found its way to Australia. It's Dylan's fourth visit to this country. In 1966 he toured at the peak of his encounter with electric rock'n'roll, returning in 1978 with a Las Vegas style cabaret routine notable for little besides its blandness and Dylan's fixation with face make-up. In 1986 he joined forces with Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers for an equally dismal series of concerts.

This time he arrives with a stripped down band, dividing the concert between electric band performances and acoustic renditions. If overseas set lists are any indication it's a Greatest Hits style show featuring as many of his famous songs as any fan could reasonably expect to hear in two hours, plus a smattering of material from recent albums like the critically acclaimed *Oh Mercy* and the far less enthusiastically received *Under The Red Sky*.

Yes he'll probably play *Like A Rolling Stone*, *Mr Tambourine Man*, *Blowin' In The Wind*, *Lay Lady Lay*, *I Shall Be Released*, *All Along The Watchtower* and *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. And if the tapes I've heard (circulating among Dylanopiles) are any indication he's still a hit and miss proposition – but when he's on, the performances are as fiery and passionate as anything he's done onstage in many a year.

"My old songs are always interesting to me," replies a slightly defensive Dylan on the telephone from Los Angeles just prior to his departure for Australia. I'd just suggested to him that playing so many of his older songs might get just a little boring for him.

This is my second encounter with Dylan. In 1986 I 'interviewed' him after a concert in Auckland. The conversation lasted a good seven and a half minutes and it was obvious that Dylan had absolutely no interest in talking to the media. He sidestepped any specific questions in much the same way as he toyed with journalists in the mid 60's. His only straight answer was to a question about the legendary American country singer Hank Williams who Dylan had said in a previous interview he would have liked to meet. Williams died in the early 1950s.

"What would you ask him if he was sitting here now," I asked. Dylan leaned across the table and said, **"I'd wanna know where he got his drugs from."**

Dylan's aversion to being interviewed is part of rock legend. Before his encounter I'm told not to ask any questions about the old days, not to bring up Joan Baez or ask him what the 14th line of Desolation Row really means. It's better, comes the instruction, if I keep my questions to the last year, and don't come across like a Dylan expert or fan. Dylan likes "straight media".

This time the man's in fine form. He laughs every so often and at least attempts to deal. with each question. Dylan is not a great conversationalist. Every answer is punctuated by mutterings, sniffling, and pauses that seem to go on forever. An interview with Dylan is rarely anything but a series of frustrating attempts to get coherent answers. Dylan is at least relatively expansive on the subject of the Never-Ending Tour which he says wasn't started with the intention that it would continue for so many years. **"No, this is just my pattern over the last three or four years, to play at least 100 times a year, maybe a little bit more, maybe a little bit less,"** Dylan says. **"It just works out better for me because it's not necessary to be looking for a band all the time. That's the advantage of just going out to play. If you're only going out once in a while then, you know, you have a problem trying to find a band and trying to find people who aren't playing with somebody else at that time, and it's... in the long run it's better to just go out and do the shows and either it's happening or its not."**

It's a reasonable leap of faith to take that on face value – to accept that someone of Dylan's stature has played around 500 shows in the last four years merely because he's worried that his band members might go off and play with someone else. Maybe he's taking the travelling troubadour caper to extremes. Maybe he genuinely does need the adoration. Certainly there's other things he could be doing.

Of all the new countries Dylan has visited during the Never-Ending tour it's Argentina and Brazil that he's the most expansive about.

"Yeah, Argentina, ah, ah, ah, you know, it's really dusty down there, but Brazil was the same two times in a row," he says.

"It's okay. It's a different scene. You never know really... it's kind of like makeshift sound almost. You're never really sure about the facilities you're playing in, and what can be heard because everything looks so funky but, ah... ah... ah... the people were very responsive and it was relaxing being down there."

One of the most significant experiences for Dylan over the past four years of touring was visiting the site of the concentration camp at Dachau.

"No-one had ever taken me to one before, and someone took me to one, yeah, last time we were in Germany someone took me to one of them concentration camps," Dylan says.

"It's a pretty spooky place."

A moving experience?

"Well you can't help but be moved by seeing all the regalia they have in there. It looked pretty much like whatever they were supposed to look like. Monuments you know, monuments of death. That's what they were."

The last year has seen the usual accolades heaped on Dylan. *Life Magazine* listed him s one of "The 100 Most Important Americans of the 20th Century." The National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences awarded him the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Grammy Awards, and most significantly for Dylan, the French government recognised his contributions with their highest cultural honour, Commandeur de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, which has only been awarded to 35 individuals since the Revolution (Chevalier, Chaplin, and very few Americans). The Minister of Culture and Communications decorated Dylan during the course of a five night engagement at Le Grand Rex in Paris. This was obviously one award that Dylan took extremely seriously.

"Oh yeah," he says. **"That was a heavy thing, being given an award by a French government, especially in the area of creativity, you know, because of the French influence in my own stuff."**

Questioned about why he plays smaller venues in preference to larger auditoriums he's equally offhanded.

"The sound is easier to control, and it's not so much of a circus," he says.

So does Dylan still enjoy the grind of touring? Doesn't there come a point when he'd prefer to get back home for an extended period?

"There comes a point for everything, but... ah, you know... playing music's a full time job you know," he mutters. **"It's hard to shut if off and turn it off and on like a faucet."**

Possibly that's the (unlikely) key to it all -that it remains in his blood and he feels as though he doesn't have a choice. That doesn't however explain Dylan's extended period away from touring, some breaks, punctuated by occasional performances, lasting as long as seven years.

In his excellent biography of Dylan, Behind The. Shades, Clinton Heylin suggests that! this is one of only three periods in his career when Dylan has combined frequent studio activity with prodigious bouts of touring. All have coincided with periods of turmoil in Dylan's personal life, almost as if the road becomes an easy escape from the issues I he must face head-on in life away from the road.

If that's the case with the Never-Ending Tour Dylan certainly isn't saying anything.

Questions about his personal life are strictly off-limits. A strong air of paranoia surrounds most of his activities. In a 1990 interview he explained his dislike of being photographed: **"It rubs me the wrong way, a camera. It doesn't matter who it is, someone in my own family could be pointing a camera around. It's a frightening feeling... Cameras make ghosts out of people."**

At recent concerts Dylan has refused to allow photographers in the theatres, and made things even more difficult by shrouding himself in darkness for most of the concert. It has been reported that these days Dylan is rarely seen by members of his band or crew. He travels in his own bus, away from the musicians, and often stays at different hotels. His appearance at soundchecks are rare and he often doesn't turn up for rehearsals. Agreeing to sign an autograph for a fan is extremely unusual.

Dylan also doesn't like his concerts being recorded and tapes circulated. During the Never-Ending Tour he's been known to throw in covers of songs as diverse as Bruce Springsteen's Dancing In The Dark, and Townes Van Zandt's Ponchy And Lefty.

"Where did you hear that if you don't mind me asking?" says a suddenly serious Dylan.

Told that I haven't actually heard the tapes, but have read they're occasional inclusions, he sounds relaxed.

Whilst the Dylan industry rolls on around him with a regular stream of biographies and critical studies appearing on the market, Dylan at least feigns disinterest. **"Not really,"** he replies when asked if he bothers to look at any of the books and find out what people are saying about him and his work.

"No. It seems like they come out pretty regular now (laughs)**. It's it's... ah... it's ah... they really don't... it doesn't knock me out to read a book about myself, you know."**

There's other books to read?

"Yeah, yeah, exactly." So what has Dylan been reading of late? **"My, ah, my latest book... it's been out for a long time, but my latest thing of just reading was back into reading the William Blake poems again,"** Dylan says.

"It seems like when you're young and you read 'em they don't have the effect on you that they do when you get older. It was years ago when it was time just to read all those guys, but lately it's been necessary for me to find some time to go back and re-read someone like Blake or Shelley, Byron, some of those people."

Aside from his reading Dylan spends much of his time on the road painting and drawing. He explains that Random House has a book of his drawings coming out later this year, the majority of it being his output from the last three years.

In keeping with his current workaholic state Dylan is also preparing to record another album. He says that half the songs are written, they're more acoustically based than recent albums, and he expects to record in Chicago soon after the Australian tour.

Does Dylan find that the songs come easier as he gets older or is it more difficult to find new things that he wants to say? Certainly songs like Wiggle Wiggle ("Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle

'til the moon is blue/ wiggle 'til the moon sees you", etc) from his last album weren't exactly highpoints of his songwriting career.

"Well they're coming natural if they come at all," he says, laughing loudly.

"So... um... when it's not coming... ah... ah, there's really no inclination on my part to make it happen."

Dylan's apparent jovial mood suggest that maybe it's time to throw in the inevitable question about Gypsy Fire, the woman who's been consistently in the media over recent years because of her (successful) action against The Truth newspaper over allegations that she was Dylan's sex slave during the 1986 tour.

"Oh yeah, is she still around?" Dylan chuckles.

After being told that Fire is planning to write a book about their time together and the court case, Dylan sighs.

"Ooooh, poor girl, you know," then out of the blue Dylan says, **"Hey listen, you can say hi to that guy Brett Whiteley... is he still around there painting? He gave me some drawings the last time there and they still look good to me."**

A couple of hours later I call Whiteley to pass on the message.

"He's a weird cat, Bob is," Whiteley says.

Couldn't have put it better myself.

Stuart Coupe

1 April 1992
Peter Wilmoth Interview, Melbourne, Australia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 561-562.

An interview given to Peter Wilmoth during the 1992 Australian Tour. It was conducted in Dylan's dressing room at the Palais Theatre in Melbourne following his show on April 1st. It appeared in the April 3rd edition of *The Age*.

DYLAN: JOKES, LAUGHTER AND A SERIES OF DREAMS

Bob Dylan is considering the symbolism of the 60's voice of youth turning 50 last year. **"Well, Rod's around,"** he says, **"He must be close to me or even above me.** (Rod Stewart is 47)**. A couple of 'em are around. The Stones."** What does he think of the Stones 30 years later? Dylan breaks up laughing. **"If you like that sort of thing."**

Bob Dylan: sit-down-comic? The man who has been called one of this countries most influential – and possibly earnest – figures is not expansive, but he's not walking out of the interview after seven minutes either, as he did to one journalist. This is a kinder, gentler Dylan, cooling off after his first Melbourne show on Wednesday night. Dylan is a small man, almost curled up in his chair. His shoulders are hunched against intrusion. He offers a limp hand and a grunt in greeting. This is Dylan in a good mood. When Dylan has agreed to meet a journalist after refusing 300 requests for interviews when he turned 50 in May last year is unclear. But *The Age* is the beneficiary of half an hour of sometimes incomprehensible, sometimes lucid thoughts, punctuated by three or four belly laughs. Americas greatest living poet is actually being charming.

Since he became famous in the coffee shops of New York's Greenwich Village in 1961, Dylan has embodied other peoples dreams and ideals of the '60's. **"People seem now to have forgotten about it,"** he says. **"People are now more or less interested in the '90s. Sixties memories are fading a little."** There seems to be a 60's revival every few months. Dylan smiles. **"There were 60's revivals in the 60's."**

When journalists are finally allowed to touch the hem, they are usually forewarned not to get personal. **"There's nothing that is really very interesting about me,"** Dylan protests, laughing **"Talking about me doesn't make a conversation more interesting. It doesn't interest me to talk about me. It's my least favorite subject** (laughs again)**."**

But Dylan seems happy enough when asked about his children Anna, 25, and Jacob, 21, who with Sara Dylan, were immortalised in the song *Sara* from his acclaimed 1975 album *Desire*. **"They're just around. I have an extended family, this, that and the other. We get on well, for the most part."**

After 30 years of singing *Blowin' In The Wind*, does he perform the early songs under sufferance? **"I do those songs because they feel right to sing,"** he says. **"Even if they weren't my songs, they're my style of song, and they are oriented to what I am doing today."**

He is tired of interpreting his early songs too literally. **"Some of my records I've been overloaded with, some parts and arrangements,"** he admits. **"Whereas the song itself still has its strength for me. With some of the older songs, the vision is still quite focused."**

Strangely he admits to changing the list of songs he performs to keep certain fans happy. **"There are a lot of people that come to our shows lots of times, so just for them, it's a good idea to do different things. It's not like they come and see me once."**

Dylan has recently been the subject of a biography, Clinton Heylin's *Behind The Shades*, and there are several retrospectives, including a three-CD boxed set of "bootlegged" versions of his earliest songs. **"Well, you know, people bootleg concerts, they might as well be out legally. Nobody would ever have thought that was that big a business. They sell quite a bit."**

Was there any music Dylan admires today? **"No. Nothing."** He believes music lost the plot. **"There was a cut-off point sometime."** The early 70's? **"Maybe. When the machines got into making music, you could turn it off more. It seemed to take a different turn at that point and the purpose got kind of lost."**

The audience at Dylan's shows consists largely of people who were in nappies when he released *All Along The Watchtower* in 1968. **"I'm lucky to have any audience,"** Dylan says, **"A lot of my contemporaries really don't have any."**

His views on Australia are a little disjointed, but he claims to be fascinated by a country so different from his own. **"To me Australia is ancient ground broken off from Africa, and that's why there are different animals here. Someone told me kangaroos are prehistoric. The people who are indigenous are prehistoric, too. Just looking at the ground... it doesn't look this way in America or Europe. This is ancient territory. For that reason alone, it's worth spending time here."**

Dylan said recently that he'd written enough songs. **"My songs aren't written like they used to be, which was all the time. They come slower now** (laughs)**."** Dylan ties a towel around his head and walks out of the dressing room and disappears into his tour bus. To rejuvenate himself, he sometimes decides to escape from the circus. **"Oh, I get away to the boondocks somewhere."**

17 April 1992
Michael Wilson interview at Airport Arrival, Auckland Airport, Auckland, New Zealand

Source: *Circulating tape*

MW: What sort of music can we expect to hear?
BD: Oh… All kinds.
MW: What style? Any particular style? Will it be electric or acoustic?
BD: Yep.

mid-1992
Good As I Been To You press release(?)

Source: *TWM* #891(2611)

Good As I Been To You

As you probably know, the album was released on 3 November 1992 in the United States, just short after the Tribute on 16 October. Don Ienner, who intoned at the Tribute, said that this was *A coincidence*, adding that he'd only got confirmation of the album *Three months ago when his representative handed me the acoustic album at a sales meeting in Toronto.* So if we assume Ienner was given the tapes or something, this would mean it was finished by July/August 1992, since the quote from Columbia's president was published on 7 November 1992.

Ienner also said *We never question his creativity. What he give, he gives. No changes are ever made to the records.* Dylan's comments were given ass follows: **Donnie suggested me making this record years ago. It just took a while to organise getting the songs together.**

22 November 1992
Elliot Mintz interview, Los Angeles, California

Source: *"The Beatle Years"*, The Westwood One Radio Network, 18 January 1993

On November 22nd, 1992, I sat down with Bob Dylan to talk about his new album, *'Good As I Been To You.'* In the process, we got to chatting about John Lennon.

EM: Twelve years now after John's passing… A long time to examine the body of work and what he left behind musically. What do you think his most significant contribution was to rock n' roll… as an artist?

BD: He was talented as a musician which you don't see… It's just like another one of those things… People don't give him credit for saying something that takes over… It's like personality takes over at a certain point. To me, he could play and he sang great. And he had the attitude of course. You know, it's hard to separate what he did as a Beatle, because the attitude was there that he had. To me it was the same attitude earlier on before he did the primal therapy thing and came out. To me, he was always a musician first. Like, to me, his version of "*Stand By Me*" is *the* version regardless of the song's been done so many times, but his was better than the original.

All this stuff was like that. It had an attack to it, you know, that is very rare. Of course, when he put his own thing behind it, it was quite overwhelming. With is "*Working Class Hero*" –type thing and "*Instant Karma*" kind of thing… To me, it was all just a… you know, you could hear it all there with "*I Wanna Hold Your Hand*" but then of course, the harmonies and that stuff had kind of deluded a lot of it. But if you're asking me how he is perceived, to me he is perceived first and foremost as a musician. And he had an amazing sense of melody, and lyrically he was no slouch, either.

EM: He used to say, in he public statements or recorded statements, he used to say that every time the two of you bumped into each other, from his point of view, he was always kind of paranoid and nervous.

BD: (yawns)

EM: Did you get that sensation from him?

BD: No. He never gave me that impression. No kind of way.

EM: He felt that there was always kind of like a healthy rivalry between the two of you.

BD: Yeah, (cut in the recording) **it was never like one of those that kind of things where we got Brian Wilson we gotta beat that record, we gotta beat this record, and then they're coming back and they're making another one only to make it a Sgt Pepper, you know, whatever. To me, that kind of thing never really existed. Maybe for those other guys it did, because they were all fighting for chart positions and things. Coming from my world of the folk music world that never really entered into any element of trying to better somebody else. Trying to make this recording better than that recording, this was all records. Those guys went to the recording element of everything and it wasn't my scene, so it never was really a competitive thing.**

---(commercial break)---

What lasts for me in that is the songs he left.

EM: Do you have a favorite?

BD: Not really a favorite. There are some that jump out of me more than others; "*Nowhere Man*". One of my favorites, really, don't ask me why is "*Mother*", but I don't kind of figure out why. He was doing it all the way, you know.

EM: He had some moments where he took some good-natured kidding with you and your approach. Did it bother you?

BD: No, one of my old drummers, he used to play me a tape where he was like spoofing *"Serve Somebody"* or something like that. No, it didn't bother me, it intrigued me. Why would it effect him such a way? Like who cares? It was just a song.

EM: I wondered if about that, too, if that really did impact him. I also think he personally loved and tried to imitated your voice. You know, it was just something that he would fall into frequently. He just enjoyed the experience. And over the years, people have sometimes asked me whether or not that ever bothered you of it you took offence at that?

BD: No, not really.

EM: When you think back about him now. Beside the music, was there anything particularly endearing or special that he'd left you with? Some people say it was the humor, some people say it was the cynicism, some people say it was that edge that he…

BD: He was very quick witted, wasn't he?

EM: Yeah.

BD: Like a lot of those English guys were just so sharp for sure.

EM: You never recorded with him, did you?

BD: Ah, yeah, once, but no one never come up with the tape.

EM: I guess there was a great rock n' roll rumor that the two of you actually made a tape together.

BD: No, ah… Those were… That is all pretty shaky in my mind. What happened and what didn't happen, but it seems to me there was a tape running at his house. Where was it again?

EM: Kenwood or Tittenhurst Park?

BD: Yeah, that one. Seems to me he had a tape recorder.

EM: Did you record when you were singing?

BD: Probably some kind of things It might've been Gene Vincent songs or something.

EM: Oh, if anybody knows where the tape is we'd love to hear from them. It'd be a nice thing to have, wouldn't it?

BD: (pause) **Yeah.**

EM: Anything else come to you about John?

BD: Ah, he was just a wonderful guy, really. Well, you know – cool. Anything from me that I could say is that he was a kind of a wonderful guy, but he was, speaking as a musician, he was someone to look up to.

28 April 1993
Willie Nelson's Big Six-O: An All Star Birthday Celebration, KRLU- TV Studios, Austin, Texas

Source: *Circulating tape*

Comment #1

He's like a philosopher, you know. He gets to the heart of it in a quick way, gets it out and it's over. And this leaves the listener to think about it.

Comment #2

His guitar playing is really, you know, pretty phenomenal. I don't really see anybody giving him any credit as a musician, but in my book he's up there on top.

Comment #3

He takes whatever thing he's singing and makes it his. There's not many people who can do that. Even something like an Elvis tune. You know, once Elvis done a tune, it's pretty much done. But Willie is the only one in my recollection that has even taken something associated with Elvis and made it his. He just puts his sorta trip on it…

23 June 1993
Gino Castaldo Interview, Athens, Greece

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1101-1102.

June 23-24 1993, Dylan gives interviews to a number of Italian journalists, in advance of his three Italian shows (June 25-27). This one with Gino Castaldo was clearly conducted via telephone after Bob had finished his two shows in Greece (June 22-23). It was published in *La Repubblica* on June 24th. This version has come from Karl Erik Andersen's web site – translation by Cuccu Alberto.

The phone rings and on the other side I hear the unmistakable nasal voice of Bob Dylan saying: **"Hello, I'm Bob Dylan"**.

This is that kind of situation you would never expect to happen.

I have on the telephone Bob Dylan, calling from Greece, coming for a short tour in Italy in a few days (tomorrow in Naples, Pisa on Saturday, Milan on Sunday). He tells me in Greece it's very hot but everything is going well. It's really amazing, especially considering how few interviews he gave in so many years.

In Italy he granted only one interview, in Verona 1983, when he answered evasively and sarcastically to every question. The reason for this decision, considering that Dylan is followed everywhere by someone asking for an interview, will for ever remain a mystery. Anyway it's happening, he speaks very kindly though, as is his style, his answers are short.

The interview:

GC: Mister Dylan, in your concerts it seems that the songs, even the older ones, are changing all the time. Why are you changing them so often?

BD: Time lets me find new meanings to every song, even in the older ones, and it's important to be always looking for new meanings. Yes, the body of the song remains the same but it wears new clothes.

Dylan speaks slowly and he is even intelligible, much more than he is on stage where he makes even his most famous lyrics unrecognizable.

GC: Why did you choose to make a record of traditional folk songs like *Good As I've Been To You*?

BD: It happened by chance. I needed a short time to record these songs; these songs are really important to me, followed me during all these years so I've treated them as if they were my songs, not like covers. It took a short time, you know these are folk songs and do not need too many ornaments.

GC: So speaking of acoustic records. Is it true you're going to record an "*Unplugged*"?

BD: Yes we spoke about it, but I'm not sure I will. Maybe when the moment's right... it could happen.

GC: Which of your albums is your favorite one?

BD: The one I still have to do!

GC: Which is your next dream to make true?

BD: Well my next musical dream is to make a record of classical music. I'm already working with a symphony orchestra... maybe one day...

GC: Don't you feel sometimes like prisoner of a veil that someone else "stuck" on you?

BD: I don't mind it. Following your own way, every day looks different from the others. Yes, there was a time I didn't feel understood, and it's true, it was a problem. Now I don't think about it, you know, people have changed, I'm not seen the way I once was. I feel much more free, not restricted.

GC: What do you think when you see religion used as an instrument of war?

BD: The problem is that there is too much politics inside religion, as there has always been. It can't be any different. Politics is everywhere.

GC: By the way, are you aware of what is happening in Italy?

BD: Yes, I know, politics is overflowing.

GC: And do you think the music can do anything about it?

BD: It depends on which music you are speaking about. Surely music can get over every barrier!

GC: For the first time you have been on a stage for a politician, I'm speaking about Clinton. Why?

BD: It happened when he had already been elected. I didn't help his electoral campaign. Was it the first time? Maybe yes, maybe no, anyway the fact is no-one invited me there before.

Dylan starts speaking about when he was a child, about the difficulty of living in a family where music was frowned upon. He tells us of the first time he heard Elvis Presley. Then we speak about his tour, and a great one he will probably do together with Santana next year, the call ends kindly and we still are wondering was he really Bob Dylan?

August 1993
Greg Kot interview for Chicago Tribune

Source: *On The Tracks* #2 Fall/Winter 1993, pp. 14-17.

The following interview was conducted by Greg Kot for the *Chicago Tribune* in August 1993. The entire *Chicago Tribune* article is reprinted, followed by excerpts from the interview that were never published.

Their days as media-hyped supernovas behind them, Bob Dylan and Carlos Santana say they couldn't be happier. Dylan, who merely changed the course of popular culture in the 20th Century, and Santana, who stretched the boundaries of rock guitar after his explosive coming-out party at Woodstock, will share the stage August 28 at the World Music Theatre.

If such a pairing had occurred in, say, 1970, it would have been an event on par today with a Nirvana/Pearl Jam double bill. But neither Dylan nor Santana is central to the pop *Zeitgeist* these days, nor do they seem particularly keen to keep up with a new generation of rock icons. (If anything, it's the other way around; at last year's tribute to Dylan at Madison Square Garden, Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder and Mike McCready performed a particularly moving version of Dylan's "*Masters of War*.")

Dylan's last release, *Good as I Been to You* (Columbia), is a stark, solo acoustic album in which he interpreted a variety of traditional folk and blues, throwbacks to his days at Gerde's Folk City in Greenwich Village. He says a new album, out this year, will take a similar but **"more focused"** approach to another batch of traditional songs.

Santana's 1992 album, *Milagro* (Polydor), contains a few cliché-ridden forays into pop but also is laced with adventurous guitar excursions that draw as much on post "*Bitches Brew*" jazz as they do rock.

In a three-way phone hookup, Dylan and Santana remained as iconoclastic as ever. Santana was typically passionate and effusive, while Dylan spoke with a warmth and directness that belied his reputation as an enigmatic interview. If their past achievements cast a huge shadow, neither is intimidated by it.

"My whole thing has been about disallowing demagoguery." Dylan says. **"The songs I recorded in my past, they're almost like demos. I'm still trying to figure out what some of them are about. The more I play them, the better idea I have of how to play them."**

Which may explain why Dylan seems perpetually inclined to tamper with his classics, messing with chords and altering his phrasing as he turns "*Like a Rolling Stone*" into a shuffle or "*All Along the Watchtower*" into a dissonant rocker.

"My audience has changed over a couple of times now," Dylan says. **"A lot of 'em don't even know '*Like a Rolling Stone*.' They're not enchanted by the past, and I don't allow the past to encroach on the present."**

Santana, who broke ground by mixing rock guitar with Latin percussion on such songs as "*Soul Sacrifice*," says, "I made a commitment about 1972, with our fourth album, which was almost all instrumental, to go another way. I learned from people like Miles Davis and Weather Report. I wasn't afraid of any comparisons, because I was too concerned about the next note."

If the music of Dylan and Santana takes on a new life on stage, it has struggled to find its identity in the studio over the last 15 years. It's no surprise that Dylan's best record in years—*Good as I Been to You*—was recorded live in one take, without backing musicians.

"Modern recording technology never endeared itself to me," says Dylan. **"My kind of sound is very simple, with a little bit of echo, and that's about all that's required to record it. I'm most disappointed when producers overlook the strength of my music."**

"The way most records sound these days, everything is equalized. My kind of music is based on non-equalized parts, where one sound isn't necessarily supposed to be as loud as another. When producers try to equal everything out, it's to dismal effect on my records."

With *Milagro*, Santana also went for a live-in-the-studio approach.

"Some of my favorite records, like Mary Wells' '*My Guy*,' were recorded with the musicians and the singer all gathered around one microphone," he says. "That gave the voice treble tones, chest tones, abdominal tones, depth. With all the technology today, you lose the over-tones, which is what gives people chills when they listen to a record. Producers today know the construction of knobs and wires, but they don't know a damn thing about feeling and sound. They don't know how to capture the soul of someone like Bob."

The antiseptic nature of studio recording is only partly to blame for the erratic albums that Dylan and Santana have released. Bad songs and indifferent or misdirected performances have something to do with it, too. But scintillating moments still occur. The title track of *Milagro* is prime Santana, his guitar cutting majestic swaths through a battery of percussion. And Dylan's exquisite, if idiosyncratic, guitar playing and vocal phrasing throughout *Good as I Been to You* is enough to pull any number of disenchanted fans back into the fold.

Clearly, Dylan's career, even at age 52, is still a work in progress. Which is why it seemed a bit odd for a bevy of rock stars, from Neil Young to George Harrison, to be paying tribute to him at Madison Square Garden last year, even if it was the 30th anniversary of his first record.

Dylan says it was **"hard not to be overwhelmed,"** but **"it was really about all those songs,"** speaking as though someone else had written them. **"It was fun to hear them performed. I just tried to stay out of it."**

As for Sinead O'Connor, Dylan says he wasn't miffed that she had a standoff with the audience and was ultimately booed off the stage.

Although he didn't get a chance to speak with her, he says, **"I hold no rancorous feelings,"** perhaps because he empathized. As Dylan electrified his music, figuratively and literally, in the mid-'60s, he was greeted by boos, most notoriously at the Newport Folk Festival and then on an epochal tour of England with the Hawks, later known as The Band.

"It was weird at Newport, because you could tell these people were trying to follow me, but I was a bit ahead of them," Dylan says. **"You just try and dust yourself off and get on with it. With The Band, it** (the audience reaction) **would be consistent, every town we played in. It seemed a lot of it was a media thing, where they were telling the audience ahead of the show what to expect. It would cause the audience to react a certain way, instead of deciding for themselves. It was one of those things that is... very corrosive."**

Santana says he has dealt with isolated boo-birds, "but I don't take it personally. It's usually somebody who's in the wrong place. One time in London, I told a guy to come up and handed him my guitar. He choked on his own emotions. I said, 'You have to make love to it, you don't just jump in.' "

Just as Santana put a pretender in his place, Dylan is equally skeptical of the new wave of rock and rap artists whose records bristle with graphic images of sex and violence. In the '60s, Dylan's approach to such subject matter was deemed revolutionary, with its mix of humor and spite, dream-like imagery and shattering directness.

"I'm not saying they should be censored, but it would be nice if there were some kind of quality control," he says. **"A lot of stuff out there is just not meaningful. The record companies shouldn't be involved** (in censoring artists)**, but maybe the artist should be made to sign a contract asking, 'Do you mean it?' "**

Below are previously unpublished questions and answers from the *Chicago Tribune* interview.
Greg Kot (GK) and Bob Dylan (BD)

GK: Is playing in front of an audience, with all its expectations of what a Bob Dylan show should be, still satisfying?

BD: It's very addictive. The emotion of it never wears out.

GK: The songs you recorded for *Good As I Been To You* were from your days at places like Gerde's Folk City. You recorded them very much like you might have played them back then, and it's fascinating to hear how "*Blackjack Davey*" might've influenced "*Boots of Spanish Leather*"; how "*Tomorrow Night*" suggests "*On a Night Like This*" and "*Diamond Joe*" could've been a blueprint for "*Maggie's Farm*."

BD: Those songs couldn't have been improved with any kind of instrumentation. Those songs worked their way into my own songs, I guess, but never in a conscious way. They're all pretty simple. Just three chords. It's not like doing an album of Paul McCartney songs. It's like nobody really wrote those songs [on *Good as I Been to You*]**. They just get passed down.**

GK: One thing about *Good as I Been to You* that's particularly appealing is the expressiveness of your voice. It seems like without a backing band to have to shout over, your voice sounds almost liberated.

BD: My voice was never really that glamorous. But a big vocal range really isn't necessary for the type of songs I sing. For what I sing, my voice does pretty well.

21 August 1993
Dennis Michael interview for CNN Entertainment, Seattle

Source: *On the Tracks* #2, Fall/Winter 1993, p. 17.

The following interview was conducted by Dennis Michael for CNN Entertainment News (Seattle, Washington) in August 1993. Jim Moret, Anchor (JM); Dennis Michael (DM); Bob Dylan (BD), and Carlos Santana (CS)

JM: Musical legends Bob Dylan and Carlos Santana are finishing out the summer on the road, touring together in a series of concerts. In a rare and exclusive interview, Bob Dylan, along with Carlos Santana, spoke with CNN's Dennis Michael at a tour stop in Seattle.

BD: (singing in concert) ***"There must be some way out of here—"***

DM: There must be some kind of way out of touring, but if there is, Bob Dylan doesn't seem to be interested in finding it. Dylan performs upwards of 100 shows a year and gets puzzled when people ask him why, in his advanced state of legendhood, he still performs so extensively.

BD: Playing music is addictive. It's nothing you can—you either play it or you don't play it, so it's not like it's a hardship to do it. It's kind of strange for anyone to ask why someone would want to do it anymore than why would somebody want to be a well-digger, really. Work is work—you just become addicted to it.

DM: Neither Dylan, nor his tour partner, Carlos Santana, are touring in support of an album. Santana has two albums in progress right now, but that has little relationship to his live work.

CS: I just tour, period. And I don't support anything except the sound and the vibration. That's it. Even if I don't record an album ever again in my life, I just play because I need to play. I mean, I was born to play and that's what I do.

DM: The next album with Dylan on it has more of his words than his voice — a 2-cd set will showcase the performance of scores of artists at the 30th anniversary tribute concert which was held for Dylan at Madison Square Garden last year.

BD: It was pretty overwhelming—you know, even to a person like myself. It was quite a special thing to hear—songs, you know, like that, being played by so many comparable artists.

DM: There are few artists to compare with Dylan, though—three decades of work has brought him a widely varied audience, but that doesn't worry him.

BD: What goes through my mind is just the right—is this, you know, the right—are these the right songs for this particular crowd, but the crowds always seem the same, so it doesn't really seem to matter at the end of the show, whatever's in my mind at the beginning.

DM: And what is on Bob Dylan's mind these days?

BD: Same thing as before. These days, they don't seem much different than the old days, really.

Mid 1993
Jennifer Bowles interview for *New York Post*

Source: *The Wicked Messenger* #910 (2664), in ISIS #51, p.19

Written by Jennifer Bowles, the interview piece says that Dylan "strolls into a small, stuffy room at his management office, wearing jeans and cowboy boots topped off with a black Australian cowboy hat". Sitting down, he takes off the hat, placing it on his knee "where it rests for nearly an hour". Given the duration of the interview, the quotes are relatively short. Santana is also there and there a few quotes from him, too. Dylan speaks of being a working musician:

It's all about a livelihood... it's all about going out and playing, that's what every musician who has ever crossed my path strives for.
To me, it's a dream come true. What could be bad about traveling places, seeing different things, moving? It keeps you alive.

Later, Dylan expounds on his feelings about modern music, the music on the radio nowadays, using the contrast of two German composers to make his point:

My feeling is that the guy who's taken up modern music is what you hear in Wagner. Wagner, to me, is like one of the arch-criminals of all time. Like Beethoven would be the antithesis of Wagner and Beethoven you didn't hear very much. Wagner makes you feel gloomy and depressed, but he's popular too, and he dictates the music of the day, whether you like it or not.

So, Dylan as Beethoven. And, in the liner notes to WORLD GONE WRONG, Dylan hears these older songs as if contemporary, just as Shakespeare continues to astound and illuminate this age. Dylan has referred previously to the French epigram "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" (by Alphonse Karr in "Les Guepes", January 1849); the more often one says this, the more it seems to be true.

3 October 1993
Gary Hill interview, Dylan's San Diego hotel room, California

Source: *ISIS* #52, pp. 29-31

Quoting Ian Woodward (TWM #914(2674)), Reuters circulated two Bob Dylan reports, both with extensive quotations from Dylan. One is entitled **BOB DYLAN MAKES A PASSIONATE RECORD OF HIS FOLK ROOTS**; the other **DYLAN TALKS ABOUT RELIGION, HEROISM AND ELVIS**. (Both) look like one interview, done by Gary Hill, in Dylan's San Diego hotel, on/around 3 October 1993, but turned into two separate reports – one on the album and other a more general, more "moral" piece.

BOB DYLAN MAKES A PASSIONATE RECORD OF HIS FOLK ROOTS

SAN DIEGO, California – Bob Dylan's new album is a passionate solo performance of 10 superb, little-known songs from rural blues and ballad traditions that birthed his world-changing songwriting career. But the songs on '*World Gone Wrong*', already exciting a huge critical buzz, are no mouldy oldies dug out for dry historical reasons. **They're current,** Dylan says in an interview near the end of well-received U.S. concert tour. **All these songs are personal, but they're very universal, or catholic if you will, in encompassing all of the world. That's what makes them deep songs.**

On the hotel balcony overlooking palm trees and duck ponds, Dylan, wearing sunglasses, an open shirt and baggy striped pants, chooses the seat facing the sun before launching upon a wide-ranging conversation about his work, his personal "Shakespeares" and the world gone wrong. His sincerity, acuity and depth of feeling are evident throughout, as he searches for ways to speak his beliefs clearly -without betraying them.

It's hard for me to search for these words and try to define music. It goes against my grain trying to define any of this. Definition and explanation of it can kill it, he says. **My particular involvement is just getting into the essence of the song, getting underneath the song and to push it up. It doesn't interest me to go at the song and to try to make a current kind of Bob Dylan version of a song.**

Still, the record is quintessential Dylan, the singing and guitar-playing as fine as any he has ever recorded. **These are just good as it's possible for me to play them,** says the 52-year-old Dylan, who hoisted popular music into the realms of social activism and art and whose 30-year career was celebrated in a concert last year by superstars ranging across the eras from George Harrison to Pearl Jam.

The songs on '*World Gone Wrong*', richer and more unified than his previous solo folk collection '*Good As I Been To You*', take time and attention to appreciate. Lines emerge, haunting and hilarious by turns, as the listener figures out who is speaking, what is going on. **You can miss a line and you miss it,** Dylan says. But he feels that is is as much a symptom of modern degradation as anything else that it may take time to understand the songs. **They aren't immediately understandable because people's minds are so polluted with buying products. they're not understandable because people are tied up making important decisions on whether to buy a Coke or a Pepsi,** he says.

The songs from a kind of emotional and emotional arc from the title-tune opener – *Sorry, honey, I can't be good, the world's gone wrong*, he summarizes with a laugh – to the spiritual serenity of a '*Lone Pilgrim*' in the face of death. On an album intensely involved with moral issues, these songs do not romanticize the gamblers, murderers and "rounders" that populate them. '*Stack-A-Lee*' is an absurd, jeering tragedy – all this trouble about a silly hat – rather than the glorified "*Stagerlee*" of popular myth (attention Gangster rappers), while '*Delia*' is devastatingly sad mourning of a murdered woman who "*loved all them rounders, never did*

love me". '*Love Henry*' is a remarkable tale with an enigmatic final section in which a murderess tries to lure a parrot to her knee. **It opens up a door for another song,** Dylan says. **That's what my best songs do. In the last couple of lines, it might just open a door for another song. William Blake could have written that.**

In his liner notes, Dylan uses the songs as jumping-off points to riff on a series of moral confusions in modern life. He says the notes were written in a rush: **They were a total stream, like late one night, and the moon was full.** In those notes, he quotes from the title tune, **Strange things are happening, like never before,** adding, **Strange things like courage becoming befuddled and nonfundamental**.

But despite the apparent focus of the record, he says he had no formula in mind when choosing the songs. **It just seemed that these were the ones that kind of fit,** he says. **There's a wealth of this material around. This is just one record. There could be a hundred.** He adds, **my next record could be all my songs. But this is where it begins for me.** Dylan feels he got sidetracked as a performer when, inspired by Woody Guthrie, he began writing songs – the anthems of change like '*Blowin' In The Wind*' and '*Like a Rolling Stone*' that energized a generation of social revolt. **When my songwriting started, all that was kind of left to one side, the musician part of it was left for a while. But it was necessary for me to get back to the stuff that meant so much to me at one time,** he says.

Repeatedly, he lists his personal giants, the Blind Willie McTells and Charlie Pattons and many others. **These people who originated this music, they're all Shakespeares, you know They're Thomas Edisons, Louis Pasteurs. they invented this type of thing. In a hundred years, they'll be notable for that.** He was privileged to sit at their feet when he was young. **The people who played that music were still around then, and so there was a bunch of us, me included, who got to see all these people close up – people like Son House, Reverend Gary Davis or Sleepy John Estes. Just to sit there and be up close and watch them play, you could study what they were doing, plus a bit of their lives rubbed off on you. Those vibes will carry into you forever, really, so it's like those people, they're still here to me. They're not ghosts of the past or anything, they're continually here.**

DYLAN TALKS ABOUT RELIGION, HEROISM AND ELVIS

America gives a free license to destroy yourself at an early age, Bob Dylan says. **But what my eyes see and what my ears hear is that the young people aren't going for that.** Still amoral critic and crusader after all these years, Dylan hopes his new album will nourish those who, like him, hear a lot of bad music and see a lot of bad values nowadays. He believes '*World Gone Wrong*' offers the kind of truth-telling roots young people are hungering for. **It's underground... there are young people who are fed up with what they hear,** he says it's not nostalgia for the 1960's that attracts a young audience to his concerts. **People who come to see me play, they don't know nothing about '*Like a Rolling Stone*' or Vietnam. They don't know nothing about the British Invasion,** he says. **Half of them never heard of David Bowie. Yet they find something in seeing me play, night after night. That is very encouraging for me. Because if it weren't for seeing them – man, you would probably find me in some kind of Hard Rock Café, hanging out and greeting people or something.**

He says pop radio no longer plays music he cares about. **Even in the '60s, to use such a deplorable term really, you could turn on the radio and hear Otis Redding or Wilson Pickett or Percy Sledge or Solomon Burke. These people were making popular records. Well, that's no more.** Similarly, he says, country music singers then were close enough to the 'hillbilly' originators to be fresh and vital. **They were just one step removed from the early ones and you could hear that. But you can't hear it anymore, it's so polluted and unclean. And there are a lot of young kids that know they don't want that.** Even '*World Gone Wrong*' is a step or two removed, he says. **People should go to those old records and find out what the real thing is**

because mine is still second generation, my version of '*Broke Down Engine*' is maybe third generation from Blind Willie's version of it.

He doesn't buy the idea that popular music should be "from the street". **The street – there's taxicabs, gas fumes and buses and bank robberies and what have you, all in a single second on a street corner, with jackhammers going, and that's not my belief. Art to me doesn't mirror society. The very essence of art is subversive to society and, whatever society is putting out, art's got to do something else.**

The "seductive meditational values" of rural life are the source of the folk blues and ballads he values most. **My belief is that it comes greatly across with land. Just to be in a rural landscape gives you a better understanding of what this kind of music is all about.** He also has a workingman's distaste for many current music stars, saying they can't sing or play but get by on personality and electronic gimmickry – **when they electrified the guitar, that's as far as it needed to go,** he says. But he has a bedrock confidence in his own ability. **It's not fun and games for me to play. Everyone has something that they can do well and my particular thing is that**.

He emphasizes that some of the originators of **that real feeling of rock and roll** are still around. **Carl Perkins is still around. These people are the real thing. They're here now. They still are on this earth. Somehow,** he says, **like it or not, rock and roll is linked with sex and drugs, but why? Little Richard didn't take any drugs. Carl Perkins was a happily married man. And they made the greatest rock and roll ever.** The idea of the flamboyant Little Richard on drugs cracks him up. **I don't think he needed any drugs,** he says, chuckling and then laughing long and loud. **That's funny, Little Richard on drugs. God forbid.**

Dylan has no use for the idea of the romantic outlaw hero. **What passes for romance to me is not romance at all but just sentimental garbage,** he says, the words coming slowly. **Romance to me is built on heroism and identity, where identity is all spelled out and it's not necessary to go back into someone's life to find out who that person is – where identity is spelled out by actions,** he says. **That, to me, makes for a romantic tale. Anything else just goes into this psychological, mental gymnastics of thinking about the past.**

Dylan, who prefers not to pin down his personal brand of religion, is glad God was still in the schools in his youth. **It gave a person a belief in something more than oneself. A person who only believes in himself is doomed,** he says. **A person without faith is like a walking corpse. And now people have to fight to get faith back, especially in schools.** He says his religious education gave him a moral base. **It was easy to rebel against hypocrisy you saw in other areas because of that footing you had to stand on. If you didn't have that footing, you'd just go for the rest of it – which is kind of happening now. People are lost because they can believe anything.**

But dues-paying religions, he says, **aren't really the essence of Godly, and** he predicts, **Elvis is going to be a religion. My first trip to Graceland was about six years ago and it was just awesome and it was very clear that Elvis was going to be a religion in a lot of different ways.**

In some classic enigmatic Dylan humour, he explains, **First of all, El-vis in Hebrew means God. El is God in Hebrew. And Elvis is just a reiteration of the tribe of Levi. And anybody who wears jeans is a Hebrew. Also, anybody who wears a baseball cap backwards – that's a yarmulke. That's heavy, huh?,** he says with laugh, but adds, **The world operates on principles that we know nothing of.**

January 1994
Message for Van Morrison, Tour rehearsals, Los Angeles, CA

Source: *Circulating tape*

Van Morrison received a Brit Award for “Outstanding Contribution” at the Brit Award Gala 24 February 1994. Dylan contributed a short film shot during his 1994 world tour rehearsals presumably in January 1994 in LA.

Congratulations, Van, on this very prestigious award. Brit Award… No one is more deserving that than you. For writing all those fine songs and giving us all an inspiration though the years. Thanks a lot. God bless you, Van. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Early April 1994
Ellen Futterman Interview, St. Louis

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 965-966.

This interview took place early April 1994 and it appeared in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* of April 7th. It was written by Helen Futterman the papers' Entertainment Editor. Her long introduction has not been reproduced.

Times They Are A Changin'... Dylan Speaks

EF: You're known for being unpredictable at your concerts in terms of what you play. What can the audience at your St. Louis concert expect?

BD: Well, I've got a four-piece band. I don't know. Some old Dylan, some new, some of the acoustic stuff. The set list changes from night to night, so it's difficult to pin down what we've planned. Most of the songs will be recognizable to fans.

EF: Are you going to do another rock album or stay with the acoustic, folk sound featured on your last two albums?

BD: I might have to make another one like the last two. A lot of stuff didn't get on those. It'd be folk-oriented, but I'd use additional instruments that would give a little different sound... the banjo, maybe even a mandolin, a dulcimer.

The last two albums were necessary for me to do. I wanted to see if it was possible to play and sing and make a record all by myself with just a fraction of all that instrumentation and get a more full-bodied sound.

Paul McCartney, Peter Gabriel and maybe even Phil Collins have done it where they've played all the instruments. I wanted to get as much out of those songs as possible. Sometimes you can rescue those songs by yourself without a lot of other stuff cluttering them up. The point you try to get across is more resonant

EF: Are you still writing new material or taking a break from that?

BD: Well, yeah, I do have a bunch of papers and notes and things lying around. Only time is going to tell when those things come out.

EF: What's your favorite Dylan song?

BD: That's really hard to say. That would be scandalous. It's very difficult to pinpoint one. Each has its own moment.

EF: What sort of new music do you enjoy?

BD: I usually listen to songs about things. My musical taste ran out in the mid-60's. I listened to all that stuff and I still do, it never gets tiresome for me. But there are a lot of new artists who've got a lot of illustrious things to say. [When pressed to name a few, however, he didn't offer any up]

EF: How do you like the new Judy Collins album, where she does only Dylan songs?

BD: Is that out yet? I know she was working on it. I haven't heard it. I go back a long time with her. We used to work together in coffeehouses.

EF: What kind of touch do you keep with your folk buddies from the 60's.

BD: Joan [Baez] **calls me from time to time. We did some shows in Germany a few years back. I was just on a Mike Seeger record.**

EF: It seems as if you're always doing new things and reinventing yourself. What keeps you moving and motivated?

BD: Just life itself. There's a certain non-transparency to life that keeps me motivated. I try not to work in a linear way. That's incumbent on what's given to you at any given moment. There might be inconsistencies to that, nevertheless, it does give you a degree of independence you might not get any other way.

EF: Having had 3 decades to adjust, are you more comfortable being a living legend?

BD: I try to be an illuminated person. Nobody should put anyone on a pedestal – it really can damage a person's mentality and lead to ignorance. At that point, a person ceases to be a person.

EF: How do you protect your privacy?

BD: I don't have any privacy, so there's really not much to protect.

EF: While on the road, how do you take care of your health and spirituality? What kinds of things do you do for yourself?

BD: I try not to be a loafer. I don't work out. Maybe I'll ride a motorcycle or go horseback riding.

EF: Your son Jacob has a band called the Wallflowers. What do you think of his band?

BD: His music is very humble. They have an impressible sound.

EF: Have you played any gigs together?

BD: Just in the garage.

EF: What kind of music does he play?

BD: I'm waiting for Neil Young to tell me.

March 1995
Malcolm Jones Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1103-1105.

Sometime during February or early March 1995, Dylan is interviewed by Malcolm Jones for *Newsweek*. The prime purpose of the interview is to discuss Dylan's new book of sketches, *Drawn Blank*. The interview is accompanied by a photo taken in Bob's California studio with some of his drawings on view. It was published in *Newsweek*, 20 March 1995.

A PRIMITIVE'S PORTFOLIO
BY MALCOLM JONES Jr.

Entertainment: Dylan is reinventing himself again, this time as plain old Bob, the guy who draws.

THE ONE SURE THING ABOUT BOB Dylan is that there is no sure thing. In a musical career stretching over more than three decades, he has proven time and again that he owns the most bottomless bag of tricks in the business. With changeling grace, he has embraced folk music, rock and roll, country, and gospel; on his last two albums, pop music's most singular singer-songwriter covered folk songs written and sung before he was born.

It's the same with his public pronouncements. In interviews over the years, he has been baleful, apocalyptic, charming, abrasive, squirrelly and profound, depending on his mood. When he sat down two weeks ago for an exclusive interview with NEWSWEEK to talk about his latest project, a book of his drawings, he wore the guise of plain old Bob, earnest, articulate, self-deprecating and dam near kitten-cuddly.

"My favorite artists are people like Donatello or Caravaggio or Titian, all those overwhelming guys," he says. **"I wouldn't even know where to begin to approach that kind of mastery."** Of his own work, he is content to say, **"The purpose of my drawings is very undefined. They're very personal drawings, I guess like someone would knit a sweater, y'know?"** It takes a while to get used to this kind of talk from the man whose music elevated scorn to an art form. But then, this isn't Dylan the musician, this is Dylan the artist promoting *Drawn Blank* (Random House, $30), a collection of pencil, charcoal, and pen-and-ink drawings. Every Dylan fan has known for years that he dabbled in art. He did the cover paintings for the Band's debut album *Music From Big Pink*, and his own *Self Portrait*, and in the '80s, his sketches adorned the album jacket art of *Infidels* and *Empire Burlesque*. But with this book he's laid his artistic bid on the line.

Asked where the idea came from, Dylan says it came from his publisher. David Rosenthal, Dylan's editor at Random House, says the idea came from Dylan's people. Dylan denies he had much to do with putting the book together; he submitted drawings and they did the rest. But Rosenthal says Dylan was "deeply, deeply involved." The only thing that's clear is that the man who sang "*It's always been my nature to take chances*" is walking on untried ground and doing damage control with every step.

He needn't worry so hard. There's nothing in this book to rival Rembrandt, and the selection might have been more rigorously culled (captions would be nice too). But the best of the work displays a becoming spareness of line and a loopy but engaging sense of composition. Hotel

rooms, street scenes, big diesel trucks. Dylan doesn't do pretty. He's content to take the world as he finds it, and whatever is, is interesting.

"I don't concoct drawings out of my head. It's all out there somewhere and that's the only way I can work or get any satisfaction out of doing it," he says, sitting in an empty Manhattan recording studio where, well into a Saturday night, he's been rehearsing his band for a European tour. With his black-and-gray checked shirt hanging out over black slacks, black boots and his every-day-is-a-bad-hair-day hair framing a motel tan, the 53-year-old Dylan looks every inch the rock and roll eminence gone a tad long in the tooth. Setting fire to a filtered Camel, he continues, **"These drawings, they kind of go with my primitive style of music."** Both are based in reality, and in both music making and drawing he aims to lose himself. **"It's almost like meditating. I feel like I'm renewed after I make a drawing."**

A lot of Dylan's art, his portraits particularly, resemble the drawings high-school kids do for fun on the covers of their notebooks. The difference is that while most people grow up and shy away from art, Dylan persists. Like his music, where professional polish has never been the point, his drawings epitomize the amateur's creed, that homemade, hand-hewn stuff is always the best.

Dylan's fascination with reality does not extend to the virtual variety. Though his life and work recently provided the subject matter for a CD-ROM package entitled *Bob Dylan: Highway 61 Interactive*, he has not yet seen it. **"I'm just rooted back there in the '50s, and what's got me this far keeps me going,"** he says with a grin. **"I know people who've got that online thing and games and things, but I find it too inhibiting to sit in front of a screen. On any level. I don't even like to sit and watch TV too much. I feel I'm being manipulated."**

'Greed': Dylan called his latest, Grammy winning album *World Gone Wrong*, and meant every word of it. Two songs are by the late Georgia bluesman Willie McTell, a musician whose passing he mourned in one of his greatest songs, *Blind Willie McTell* (*Power and greed and corruptible seed/Seem to be all that there is*) and whose work, for Dylan, symbolizes a level of craft fast vanishing. **"If you're looking for depth,"** he says, **"you gotta go back."** McTell's songs, most written in the '20s, '30s and '40s, are touchstones to reality for Dylan. **"To be around a long time, a musician has got to learn what he can trust. These songs are based on reality, like these drawings. These were real things that happened."**

Dylan's increasing fascination with the legacy of the past extends to his own early work. **"I've been working on some songs for 20 years, always moving toward some kind of perfection,"** even though **"I know it's never going to happen."** (The latest incarnation of those songs will appear next month in an album of Dylan's much-lauded *MTV Unplugged* concert.) But art for him has always been about subversive change. As a result, he can't abide those fans who want him to continue performing his old songs exactly the way he recorded them. **"I'd rather live in the moment than some kind of nostalgia trip, which I feel is a drug, a real drug that people are mainlining. It's outrageous. People are mainlining nostalgia like it was morphine. I don't want to be a drug dealer."** Chuckling at his own joke, the man who has made a career out of reinventing himself stands up to go find more cigarettes and coffee and get back to work.

May 1995
Edna Gundersen Interview

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1107-1108.

The interview took place during the first few days of May 1995, almost certainly by telephone. The emphasis is on the *MTV Unplugged* session, but it soon drifts onto other topics. Edna Gundersen's article appeared in *USA Today*, 5-7 May 1995.

DYLAN ON DYLAN, 'UNPLUGGED' AND THE BIRTH OF A SONG

On the eve of his *MTV Unplugged* album, the usually reclusive Bob Dylan agreed to an exclusive chat about his current activities. After a string of West Coast dates this month, he and his band resume touring in Europe in June, then return for a full US tour this fall. He spent three weeks in January writing new songs but probably won't record them before 1996. What else? Read on.

EG: How did you plan this *Unplugged* project?

BD: I wasn't quite sure how to do it and what material to use. I would have liked to do old folk songs with acoustic instruments, but there was a lot of input from other sources as to what would be right for the MTV audience. The record company said, "You can't do that, it's too obscure." At one time, I would have argued, but there's no point. OK, so what's not obscure? They said *Knockin' on Heaven 's Door*.

EG: And *Like a Rolling Stone*, your signature.

BD: I was hearing a lot about how Eric Clapton did *Layla* acoustically for *Unplugged*. That influenced me to do the same for *Like a Rolling Stone*, but it would never get played that way normally.

EG: Would you consider an *Unplugged* sequel?

BD: I'd consider doing *Unplugged* again in a relaxed setting where I didn't feel like I was on the spot. I felt like I had to deliver, and I delivered something that was preconceived for me. That wasn't a problem, but it wasn't necessarily what I wanted to do.

EG: Do you prefer playing acoustic over electric?

BD: They're pretty much equal to me. I try not to deface the song with electricity or non-electricity. I'd rather get something out of the song verbally and phonetically than depend on tonality of instruments.

EG: Was performing before TV cameras difficult?

BD: It's hard to rise above some lukewarm attitude toward TV. I've never catered to that medium. It doesn't really pay off for me.

EG: Was the studio audience a typical Dylan crowd?

BD: I'd never seen them before. (Laughs) **As I recall, they were in the polite category.**

EG: Did you approve of the finished show?

BD: I can't say. I didn't see it.

EG: You've been touring a lot in recent years. Obviously you enjoy playing live.

BD: There's a certain part of you that becomes addicted to a live audience. I wouldn't keep doing it if I was tired of it. I do about 125 shows a year. It may sound like a lot to people who don't work that much, but it isn't. BB King is working 350 nights a year.

EG: Was playing at Woodstock a special moment?

BD: Nah, it was just another show, really. We just blew in and blew out of there. You do wonder if you're coming across, because you feel so small on a stage like that.

EG: Do any of your songs feel dated or stale to you?

BD: I rarely listen to my old records. Songs to me are alive. They're not based on any con game or racket or humbug. They're real songs and they're right now. They're not songs people can listen to and say, "Oh gee, I remember where I was when I first heard that" or "That speaks for me." My songs aren't like that. They're not disposable. Folk and blues songs aren't either.

EG: But you've discarded some songs along the way.

BD: Let's face it, some of my songs don't hold up live. I can't think of any right now, but I've tried them over the years and now I just don't do them.

EG: Do current events, like the Oklahoma bombing, impact on your songwriting?

BD: Chaos is everywhere: lawlessness, disorganization, misrule. I don't know if it impacts my songwriting like it used to. In the past few years, events have affected me and I've addressed them. But unless a song flows out naturally and doesn't have to be chaperoned, it just dissipates.

EG: Do you write with immortality in mind?

BD: No. It's a here-and-now thing. A lot of songs are just interrogation of yourself. I wouldn't classify myself as any type of songwriter. I try not to force myself anywhere.

EG: Are there many unwritten songs inside your head?

BD: Probably more that have never come out than ones that have. I get thoughts during the day that I just can't get to. I'll write a verse down and never complete it. It's hard to be vigilant over the whole thing.

EG: At 53, do you feel a greater urgency about writing?

BD: Yeah, it's either that or be completely mindless about it- I've written a whole bunch of songs, so I can't say I didn't get to what I wanted to. As you get older, you get smarter and that can hinder you because you try to gain control over the creative impulse. Creativity is not like a freight train going down the tracks. It's something that has to be caressed and treated with a great deal of respect. If your mind is intellectually in the way, it will stop you. You've got to program your brain not to think too much.

EG: And how do you do that?

BD: Go out with the bird dogs.

10 August 1995
Jerry Garcia's Obituary

Source: *Jerry Garcia Tribute* website.

There's no way to measure his greatness or magnitude as a person or as a player. I don't think eulogizing will do him justice. He was that great – much more than a superb musician with an uncanny ear and dexterity. He is the very spirit personified of whatever is Muddy River Country at its core and screams up into the spheres. He really had no equal. To me he wasn't only a musician and friend, he was more like a big brother who taught and showed me more than he'll ever know. There are a lot of spaces and advances between the Carter Family, Buddy Holly and, say, Ornette Coleman, a lot of universes, but he filled them all without being a member of any school. His playing was moody, awesome, sophisticated, hypnotic and subtle. There's no way to convey the loss. It just digs down really deep.

25or26 September 1995
John Dolen Interview, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 967-970.

A telephone interview by John Dolen (Arts & Features Editor) which appeared in the *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* on Thursday September 28th 1995. It took place on either the 25th or 26th of September immediately after a rehearsal session at Fort Lauderdale. The Edge show mentioned in the interview took place on the 23rd.

A Midnight Chat with Dylan

When Bob Dylan calls, it's nearly midnight. When he speaks it is with a clear, distinctive voice. Even though he's at the end of his day, having just returned to a Fort Lauderdale hotel after a band rehearsal, he is contemplative, enigmatic, even poetic.

The Southern leg of his current tour cranks into high gear tonight with the first of two concerts at the Sunrise Musical Theatre. The tour, which has been in progress for more than a year, has earned rave reviews from critics in New York, San Francisco, Dublin. In a nearly hour-long interview with Arts & Features Editor John Dolen, the first in-depth interview he has given to a newspaper this year, Dylan talks about his songs, the creative process and the free gig at The Edge in Fort Lauderdale last Saturday.

JD: Like many others, over the years I've spent thousands of hours listening to your albums. Even now, not a month goes by without me reaching for *Blonde on Blonde*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, *Slow Train Coming*, *Street Legal*, *Oh Mercy*. Do you sit back and look at all these albums and say, hey, that's pretty good?

BD: You know it's ironic, I never listen to those records. I really don't notice them anymore except to pick songs off of them here and there to play. Maybe I should listen to them. As a body of work, there could always be more. But it depends. Robert Johnson only made one record – His body of work was just one record. Yet there's no praise or esteem high enough for the body of work he represents. He's influenced hundreds of artists. There are people who put out 40 or 50 records and don't do what he did.

JD: What was the record?

BD: He made a record called *King of the Delta Blues Singers*. In '61 or '62. He was brilliant.

JD: Your performance at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame concert in Cleveland earlier this month drew a lot of great notices. Is that important to you? What's your feeling about that institution?

BD: I never visited the actual building, I was just over at the concert, which was pretty long. So I have no comment on the interior or any of the exhibits inside.

JD: But how do you feel about the idea of a rock hall of fame itself?

BD: Nothing surprises me anymore. It's a perfect time for anything to happen.

JD: At the Edge show Saturday, you did a lot of covers, including some old stuff, like *Confidential*. Was that a Johnny Ray song?

BD: It's by Sonny Knight. You won't hear that again.

JD: Oh, was that the reason for your "trying to turn bullshit into gold" comment at the show?

BD: (Laugh). **Something like that.**

JD: Were these covers just something for folks at the Edge? Does that mean you aren't going to be doing more material like that on your tour, including the Sunrise shows?

BD: It will be the usual show we're used to doing on this tour now, songs most people will have heard already.

JD: In the vein of non-Dylan music, what does Bob Dylan toss on the CD or cassette player these days?

BD: Ever heard of John Trudell? He talks his songs instead of singing them and has a real good band. There's a lot of tradition to what he is doing. I also like Kevin Lynch. And Steve Forbert.

JD: Are there new bands you think are worth bringing to our attention?

BD: I hear people here and there and I think they're all great. In most cases I never hear of them again. I saw some groups in London this summer. I don't know their names.

JD: At this stage of your career, when you've earned every kind of honor and accolade that a person can get, what motivates you?

BD: I've had it both ways. I have had good and bad accolades. If you pay any attention to them at all, it makes you pathological. It makes us pathological, to read about ourselves. You try not to pay attention or you try to discard it as soon as possible.

JD: For some writers the motivation is that burden, that you have to get what's inside of you out and down on paper. How is it with you?

BD: Like that, exactly. But if I can't make it happen when it comes, you know, when other things intrude, I usually don't make it happen. I don't go to a certain place at a certain time every day to build it. In my case, a lot of these songs, they lay around imperfectly...

JD: As a songwriter, what's the creative process? How does a song like *All Along The Watchtower* come about?

BD: There's three kinds of ways. You write lyrics and try to find a melody. Or, if you come up with a melody, then you have to stuff the lyrics in there some kinda way. And then the third kind of a way is when they both come at the same time. Where it all comes in a blur: The words are the melody and the melody is the words. And that's the ideal way for somebody, like myself to get going with something. *All Along The Watchtower* was that way. It leaped out in a very short time. I don't like songs that make you feel feeble or indifferent. That lets a whole lot of things out of the picture for me.

JD: How did you feel when you first heard Jimi Hendrix's version of *All Along The Watchtower*?

BD: It overwhelmed me, really. He had such talent, he could find things inside a song and vigorously develop them. He found things that other people wouldn't think of finding in there. He probably improved upon it by the spaces he was using. I took license with the song from his version, actually, and continue to do it to this day.

JD: *Angelina* off the *Bootleg Series*, is such a great song, but no matter how hard I try I can't figure out the words; any clues for me?

BD: I never try to figure out what they're about. If you have to think about it, then it's not there.

JD: A song that always haunted me was *Senor* from *Street Legal*. Have you played that at all in last few years?

BD: We play that maybe once every third, fourth or fifth show.

JD: In the '70s after years abroad, I remember the incredible elation I felt coming back to the States and hearing your Christian songs, a validation of experiences I had been through in Spain. I remember the lines, *"You talk about Buddha / You talk about Muhammad / But you never said a word about / The one who came to die for us instead..."* Those were fearless words. How do you feel about those words and the songs you wrote during that period now?

BD: Just writing a song like that probably emancipated me from other kind of illusions. I've written so many songs and so many records that I can't address them all. I can't say that I would disagree with that line. On its own level it was some kind of turning point for me, writing that.

JD: With the great catalog you have and with the success this year with the *MTV Unplugged* disc, why does this concert tour have such a heavy guitar and drums thing going?

BD: It's not the kind of music that will put anybody to sleep.

JD: The other night at the Edge you left the harmonicas on the stand without touching them, any reason for that?

BD: They are such a dynamo unto themselves. I pick them up when I feel like it.

JD: You've made several passes through here in the past 10 years. Your thoughts on South Florida?

BD: I like it a lot, who wouldn't. There's a lot to like.

JD: Now there is Bob Dylan on CD-ROM, Bob Dylan on the Internet and all that stuff. Are some people taking you too seriously?

BD: It's not for me to say. People take everything seriously. You can get too altruistic on your own self because of the brain energy of other people.

JD: Across the Atlantic is a fellow named Elvis Costello, who, after you, takes a lot of shelf space by my stereo. Both of you are prolific, turn out distinctive albums each time, have great imagery have a lot to say and so on. Is there any reason that in all the years I've never seen your names or faces together?

BD: It's funny you should mention that. He just played four or five shows with me in London and Paris. He was doing a lot of new songs, playing them by himself. He was doing his thing. You sorta had to be there.

JD: Is America better or worse off than, say, in the days of *The Times They Are A-Changin'*?

BD: I see pictures of the '50s, the '60s and the '70s and I see there was a difference. But I don't think the human mind can comprehend the past and the future. They are both just illusions that can manipulate you into thinking there's some kind of change. But after you've been around awhile, they both seem unnatural. It seems like we're going in a straight line, but then you start seeing things that you've seen before. Haven't you experienced that? It seems we're going around in circles.

JD: When you look ahead now, do you still see a *Slow Train Coming*?

BD: When I look ahead now, it's picked up quite a bit of speed. In fact, it's going like a freight train now.

John Dolen revealed one extra snippet of the interview in *On The Tracks* (Vol.4, No 1) p. 9

JD: There was one quote I didn't use because when I looked at it later I wasn't absolutely positive I had it as he said it. It was near the end of the interview. So with that qualification, I give you this exclusively:

BD: The way I look at it, everybody is a priest. If they know it, they know it, and well, if they don't, they don't.

February 1997
Bob Dylan's dedication for Udo Artists' 30th Anniversary

Source: *TWM* #1298(3799) in *ISIS* #75, p. 15

Udo Artist, local promoters of Bob Dylan's Japanese tours, celebrated their thirtieth anniversary this year. To make this event, a book has been produced but it is not on general sale. There were dedications from many of the performers represented by Udo Artists, including Bob Dylan. "Mr S. Udo" is Seijiro Udo, the president of Udo Artists.

to Mr S. UDO ——
Many thanks for Everything
And Happy 30th Aniversary (sic)

Best regards Always

Bob Dylan '97

2 June 1997
Sony Music Press Release Re: Histoplasmosis

Sony Music Press Release
June 2, 1997

Bob Dylan Released From Hospital
Treatment Continues and Full Recovery Expected

Bob Dylan was released from the hospital this weekend where he had been undergoing medical tests and subsequent treatment for pericarditis brought on by histoplasmosis. He was admitted on May 25. Doctors are continuing to treat him and are confident that Mr. Dylan will make a full recovery in four to six weeks.

When asked about his plans for his recovery period, Mr. Dylan said, **"I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm just glad to be feeling better. I really thought I'd be seeing Elvis soon."**

While it is unknown exactly how Mr. Dylan contracted histoplasmosis, the fungal condition which resulted in his illness, doctors believe that the severity of his condition was due to the length of time between the onset of symptoms and the eventual diagnosis.

Mr. Dylan was forced to cancel a European concert tour that was to begin June 1 in Cork, Ireland. He plans to fulfill his U.S. concert schedule, and has recently completed work on a new album that will be released later this year.

10 July 1997
Columbia Press Release for *Time Out of Mind*

Source: *TWM* #1278 (3744), 12 July 1997, in *ISIS* #74, 8/97, p.16.

COLUMBIA PRESS RELEASE FOR "TIME OUT OF MIND"

On 10 July 1997, Columbia Records issued a press release about Dylan's new album, TIME OUT OF MIND. Although relatively brief, it contained some items of interest.

In the first place, it seems that the track listing is not absolutely final yet. The press release stated, in its opening paragraph, that "*the album will contain from 10 to 12 original compositions*". Somewhat later, it said that, "*At this time, the track list includes...*" and went on to state the eleven titles contained in 3732, except that *Trying To Get To Heaven* is now shown as *Tryin' To Get To Heaven* and *To Make You Feel My Love* as *Make You Feel My Love*. Also, there is no apostrophe at the start of *Til I Fell In Love With You*.

Secondly, whilst it says that "*several legendary musicians*" are on the album, it only mentions four in all. All are ones that we've known about: Jim Dickinson ("*whom Dylan calls a kindred spirit*"), Augie Meyers (said to play the Farfisa organ and accordion), Cindy Cashdollar and Duke Robillard.

Thirdly, there's a quote from Daniel Lanois: *The record has the kind of depth of field that hasn't been heard in a long time. Foreground information and background information. It's a most serious work, but not without its landscapes of underlying humor.*

Fourthly and more interestingly, there's an even longer quote from Dylan himself: **Working with Daniel has always been a pleasure. It's seems like we've always had some kind of understanding. We talked about these songs and how they should sound long before we recorded them. As for listeners, some people, when it comes to me, extrapolate only the lyrics from the music. But, in this case, the music itself has just a far-reaching effect, and it was meant to be that way. It's definitely a performance record instead of a poetic literary type of thing. You can feel it rather than think about it.**

Finally, the press release, deliberately one might assume, has no mention whatsoever of Billy Joel. Who he?

22 August 1997
Nick Krewen Interview, Viginia Beach, Virginia

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1109-1111.

This interview was conducted by Nick Krewen on August 22nd 1997 "in a rare phone interview from a tour stop in Virginia Beach, VA." It appeared in the *Long Island Voice*, September 11-17, 1997.

COUNTRY COUSINS CONNECT
BRAKEMEN ON THE TRACKS: BOB DYLAN AND JIMMIE RODGERS

The times may still be a-changin' but Bob Dylan has taken measures to ensure that the work of one musical icon won't be forgotten anytime soon. The music of Jimmie Rodgers, the railroad brakeman from Meridian, Miss., who is widely hailed as a pioneer in blues and country, is the subject of a star-studded tribute album recently organized by Dylan.

Released August 19, in time to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Rodgers' birth on September 8, 1897, *The Songs of Jimmie Rodgers – A Tribute* offers a wealth of noteworthy participants from the pop and country fields. U2's Bono, Alison Krauss & Union Station, Van Morrison, Steve Earl, Iris DeMent, Mary Chapin Carpenter, John Mellencamp and Dwight Yoakam are just some of the artists offering their own interpretations of such Singing Brakeman classics as *Peach Pickin' Time In Georgia*, *Mule Skinner Blues* and *Blue Yodel (T for Texas)*.

"I'm just glad to be able to bring it to the public. Somebody has to do it," said Dylan in a rare phone interview from a tour stop in Virginia Beach, VA. Dylan says he hopes the album will generate more awareness of the man also known as "The Father of Country Music" and "the Blue Yodeller" who is credited as a direct influence on such country music movers and shakers as Gene Autry, Johnny Cash, Lefty Frizzell, Merle Haggard, Ernest Tubb and Bob Wills. **"For sure he's forgotten by the younger people,"** said a healthy-sounding Dylan, 56, still recuperating from histoplasmosis, the potentially fatal heart infection that struck him in May. **"But for sure there are people around who remember. As performers we should all know him, because by understanding our past we can measure where we're going in the future."**

"I can hear him in certain performers. David Ball, for instance, probably sounds closer to Jimmie than anyone today. There's a certain charm to Jimmie's music I think we kept with the spirit of this album."

Though he never played the Grand Ole Opry or the Louisiana Hayride, Rodgers' ability to mix Southern blues with haunting hillbilly balladry has earned him eternal residences in both the Country Music and Rock and Roll Halls of Fame. Even more impressive is the notion that Rodgers established his legacy within a six-year span, beginning with the million-selling success of his very first recording of *Blue Yodel (T for Texas)* and *Away on the Mountain* in 1927 and ending with his death, of tuberculosis, on May 26, 1933, at the age of 35. Dylan says he first became aware of Rodgers' music at an early age through another country superstar.

"When I was growing up, I had a record called *Hank Snow Sings Jimmie Rodgers* and that's the first clue I had that Jimmie was unique," he said. **"The songs were different than the norm. They had more of an individual nature and an elevated conscience, and I could tell that these songs were from a different period of time. I was drawn to their power."**

"I like his songs anyway, because on the surface their lyrics seem really funny and bright, but underneath they could be alarmingly dark and dreary." But Dylan says he's unsure if one of Rodgers' most famous monikers, "The Father of Country Music," truly suited him. **"I don't know whether I associated Jimmie Rodgers with country music. I always thought that the title he had – "Father of Country Music" – was limiting. The Bate Brothers, Johnnie and Jack, the Carlisles – I saw that as country music."**

Dylan's list of candidates for the title includes a group of Depression-era names he believes are more appropriate: Frank Hutchinson, the West Virginia singer and country blues guitarist popular in the mid-1920s; Charlie Poole, the Alamance County-born singer, banjo player and leader of the North Carolina Ramblers; and Riley Pucket, a blind '20s hillbilly singer and guitarist from Alpharetta, Ga., who once was a member of Gid Tanner's Skillet Lickers.

In assembling *The Songs of Jimmie Rodgers – A Tribute*, Dylan says he didn't want to revisit territory already covered by Merle Haggard's memorable 1969 Rodgers tribute album *Same Train, A Different Time – Merle Haggard Sings the Great Songs of Jimmie Rodgers*. **"I didn't see any point to making a record like Merle Haggard's record,"** said Dylan, who offers the album as the inaugural release on his own Egyptian Records imprint. **"That's probably the definitive Rodgers record. So I had to find another way just to get Jimmie's music out there properly. I just trusted everyone involved and did it in respect to Jimmie. I wanted to feature performances by people who aren't necessarily connected to him."**

For his own contribution, Dylan chose a more obscure Rodgers' number, *My Blue Eyed Jane*. **"I didn't want to pick one of the 'Blue Yodels,'"** he explained. **"I thought that would be very obvious, so I struck the balance between what other people would pick. I assumed that a lot of other people wanted to explore the blues, so I stayed away from that for better and more melodic content."**

The album took more than a year to compile, and Dylan said all artists were left to their own devices, with minimal input from him. **"Every performer chose what song they wanted to do,"** he said. **"I could really hear the influences in the music in just about all the performers in one way or another on the record, whether first-, second-, or third-hand. Everybody was free to suggest their own choice and participate in this. We're trying to do one now on the Carter Family."**

Although Rodgers' tunes such as *In the Jailhouse Now* and *Mule Skinner Blues* are considered the backbone of country music and are poplar today, Dylan said he's not sure Rodgers would find a comfortable home in modern music times. **"I think he writes a particular kind of song, and I'm not sure if he'd find one,"** says Dylan, who flirted with country music himself on such earlier releases as *John Wesley Harding*, *Nashville Skyline* and *New Morning*. **"All those terms are so over-used, especially 'country music,' that I don't know what it is today. In my mind, it has one or two meanings."**

"Country music to me doesn't have piano in it, or drums or electric guitars. It must be some other type of music. I guess there are country singers who sing pop songs who sound more pop-oriented, or kind of like watching rock n' roll. I don't know what kind of outlet country music would be played on. To me it sounds more pop-oriented."

Dylan says Rodgers' universal appeal found both country and blues camps claiming him as a forefather. **"Because he's so singular in his guitar-chording, that already implies a contribution as a guitarist,"** he says. **"He plays songs with the kind of sentiments that aren't cosmetic. It's a departure particularly from the other stuff which was going on during his day. He knew exactly where he was heading."**

Whether it's Steve Earle and the V-Roys' raucous rendition of *In the Jailhouse Now*, DeMent's quaint *Hobo Bill's Last Ride* or Carpenter's *Somewhere Down Below the Mason-Dixon Line*, Dylan says he's pleased by the efforts contributors made to *The Songs of Jimmie Rodgers – A Tribute*. **"I like everything on it,"** he says. **"I think everybody applied themselves well. As for favorites I think everybody had to do what they had to do in order to maintain the integrity of the music. I consider this album just to be a primer Jimmie Rodgers record. It's as much for performers as their record-buying public. Jimmie Rodgers was dynamic for his time."**

As far as his own music is concerned, Dylan fans won't have to wait much longer. *Time Out Of Mind*, his first album of original tunes since 1990's *Under the Red Sky* that reunites him with the Canadian producer Daniel Lanois, will be in stores September 28. Dylan's last two studio efforts, 1992's *Good As I Been to You* and 1993's *World Gone Wrong* offered traditional folk songs. Why the delay in new material?

"This is the first album I've done in a while where I've protected the songs for a long time," replied Dylan, who is scheduled to perform September 27 before Pope John Paul II at the World Eucharistic Conference in Bologna, Italy. **"I really just waited until I couldn't wait any longer."**

28 August 1997
Edna Gundersen Interview for *USA Today*

DYLAN SAYS HE'LL ANSWER POPE'S CALL
By Edna Gundersen
USA TODAY

Bob Dylan was as surprised as his fans were Tuesday to hear he'd be performing for the pope next month.

"The pope, huh? I guess if the Vatican is reporting it, it must be happening," Dylan told USA TODAY in his first interview since contracting a rare heart infection in May. **"I'm not sure it's going to happen. I know I was the only American they asked outside of Joni Mitchell."**

Dylan is scheduled to perform for Pope John Paul II Sept. 27 at the World Eucharistic Congress in Bologna, the Vatican announced Tuesday.

Once he confirms that appearance, Dylan says he'll also try to reschedule London dates that were cancelled when his health crisis forced him to pull out of a European tour.

Dylan entered a hospital with chest pains May 25 and was diagnosed with pericarditis, a swelling of the heart sac, brought on by a fungal infection call histoplasmosis.

"I'm doing as good as I can under the circumstances," he said <u>via phone from a tour stop in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio</u>. **"I'm still taking medication three times a day. Sometimes it makes me a little light-headed and dizzy. And I need to sleep a lot. I did get the doctor's OK to do this tour. I guess I'll make it through."**

He plays tonight in Indianapolis, Thursday in Tinley Park, Ill.; Friday in St. Paul, Minn., and ends the month-long tour Sunday in Kansas City, Mo.

"I wanted to do these shows because I'd committed to it," Dylan said. **"I don't have the energy I usually have, so I have to save it all to perform. Outside of that, I'm doing as well as I can."**

Fans panicked at the news that Dylan, 56, was suffering from a potentially fatal heart disease. In his only statement to the press, he joked, **"I really thought I'd be seeing Elvis soon."**

Now he reveals, **"I was off my feet for six weeks. I was unable to walk around. When I got out of the hospital, I could hardly walk around my yard. I had to stay in bed and sleep all the time. I guess it's a slow process of recuperation."**

The infection might have been less serious had it attacked an organ besides the heart. **"If it had affected the stomach, it might have left sooner,"** he says. **"But in the heart, there's no way to flush that out. It leaves on its own."**

He was stricken while completing a new album, *Time Out of Mind*, due Sept. 30.

"Up until I was sick, I was putting songs on, taking songs off," he says. **"I didn't know what picture it was forming. When I got sick I had to let it all go. I spent a lot of time making it, but I haven't really heard it in a few months."**

September 1997
John Pareles Interview, Santa Monica, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1113-1118.

In the week commencing 21st September 1997, Dylan gave three press interviews, to John Pareles, Edna Gundersen and David Gates, essentially in support of *Time Out Of Mind*. These interviews took place in a Santa Monica hotel suite, facing the Pacific Ocean and booked by his publicist, Elliot Mintz.

The first to appear in print was the one by John Pareles, which was the cover story in the Arts & Leisure section of the *New York Times* for Sunday, 28 September 1997. As well as a cartoon and three smaller but older photographs, it is accompanied by one contemporary photograph, an exterior shot credited to Jeffrey Meyer/Columbia Records.

As might be suspected, there is some similarity in content between the three but the words used by Dylan are not identical, suggesting that they were indeed three separate interviews.

[taken from *Wicked Messenger* No. 3816]

A WISER VOICE BLOWIN' IN THE AUTUMN WIND

SANTA MONICA, Calif. – Bob Dylan can barely sit still. He pulls at his curly hair, fidgets with his black T-shirt, constantly shifts position on a comfortable couch.

Sitting in his publicist's oceanside hotel suite for a rare interview, the songwriter who transformed rock is in a jovial mood. He's wearing two-tone patent-leather shoes, there's a twinkle in his blue eyes, and he smiles easily and often.

Dylan is proud of his new album, *Time Out of Mind*, and rightfully so. The album, to be released on Tuesday, is far and away his best sustained work since the mid-1970s; it reaches the exalted level of *Blood on the Tracks*.

His new songs – his first set of them since 1990 – are embittered, heartsick and weary: "*When you think that you've lost everything, you find out you can always lose a little more*," he sings in a rasping voice whose familiar cracks have become potholes.

It's the voice of a 56-year-old man who's not hiding any of his bruises. Yet the character who runs through all the songs on the album seems nothing like the relaxed, buoyant songwriter who's talking about them. Asked who the woman was who broke his heart in song after song, he laughs and asks, **"Which one? Which song?"**

"That's just the nature of my personality," he says. **"I can be jubilant one moment and pensive the next, and a cloud could go by and make that happen. I'm inconsistent, even to myself."**

During a recording career that now spans 35 years, Dylan has been a cornucopia of inconsistency. Visionary and crank, innovator and conservator, irritant and stimulant, skeptic and proselytizer, rebel and sellout, pathfinder and lost patrol: Dylan has been all of those things, and many more.

He may well be the most restless figure in rock history, constitutionally incapable of doing the same thing twice. Apparently he meant it when he sang, in 1965, that artists "don't look back". *Time Out of Mind* is a typical Dylan album only because it eludes expectations.

In the 1960s, Dylan taught folk singers how to transcend the topical, then taught rock songwriters how to think about something more than the next romance. Casually, he created whole genres: folk rock, country rock and what's now called Americana.

Every facet of his 1960s music has been imitated, lately by his son Jakob's band, the Wallflowers. Through the 1970s and 1980s, Dylan followed more wayward, less reliable inspirations. He created the rock and roll caravan called Rolling Thunder. He embraced born-again Christianity and then returned to Judaism.

He toured with the Grateful Dead and Tom Petty's Heartbreakers, and he sold his anthem *The Times They Are a-Changin'* so it could be used in an accounting firm's commercial.

At first deliberately, and even after he repudiated the role, he became a voice for the baby-boomer generation by singing what was on his mind. Just ahead of many of his listeners, he moved from political fervor and apocalyptic visions to marriage and divorce, from searching for faith to grumbling at the nightly news.

Since his bitter divorce from the former Sara Lowndes in the late 1970s, which left her with custody of her five children, including the four they had had together, he has had a home in Malibu, Calif, and kept his private life private. But his reactions to people, ideas and the world have resounded in his songs.

Year in and year out, almost constantly since 1988, Dylan has hit the road. He has become an itinerant musician like the bluesmen and hillbilly troubadours who were his musical education, although his endless tour includes dates like the 1993 inaugural celebration for Bill Clinton and a scheduled show Saturday in Bologna, Italy, before the Pope. *"Night or day, it doesn't matter where I go anymore, I just go,"* he sings in *Can't Wait*.

"A lot of people don't like the road," he says, **"but it's as natural to me as breathing. I do it because I'm driven to do it, and I either hate it or love it. I'm mortified to be on the stage, but then again, it's the only place where I'm happy. It's the only place you can be who you want to be. You can't be who you want to be in daily life. I don't care who you are, you're going to be disappointed in daily life. But the cure-all for all that is to get on the stage, and that's why performers do it. But in saying that, I don't want to put on the mask of celebrity. I'd rather just do my work and see it as a trade."**

During the 1990s, touring with his best group since he was backed by the Band, Dylan has garnered a new audience. His shows a decade ago, often yelled or sung in a monotone, exasperated even longtime fans. But at Dylan concerts lately, collegiate types in the tie-dyed shirts of Deadheads have joined balding baby-boomer loyalists. Audiences respond to the blues and country roots of his band and to Dylan's mercurial, improvisatory side, knowing he sings his songs differently at every show.

"I like those people who come to see me now," Dylan says. **"They're not aware of my early days, but I'm glad of that. It lifts that burden of responsibility, of having to play everything exactly like it was on some certain record. I can't do that. Which way the wind is blowing, they're going to come out different every time, but the intent is going to be the same."**

Dylan has not lacked for recognition in the 90s. He has collected a lifetime achievement Grammy Award, was named a Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France and will collect a Kennedy Center Honors award in December.

Until the 90s, there was one thing that Dylan had not been: silent. Songs had always poured out of him: great, good, indifferent and awful songs, but in a steady stream. That changed after his mediocre 1990 album, *Under the Red Sky*. He went on performing older songs while releasing two albums of traditional folk and blues material, *Good as I Been to You* and *World Gone Wrong'* played solo like an early-1960s Greenwich Village folkie. *Dignity*, the one new song he released after *Red Sky*, was an outtake from the 1989 album *Oh Mercy*.

What made him quit recording new songs? **"Disillusion,"** he says. **"Disillusion with the whole process of it. I started out when you could go in the studio and record your songs and leave. I don't remember when that changed. But I found myself spending more and more time in the studio doing less and less. There wasn't any gratification in it, really. I was writing the songs, because that's what I do anyway. And then I had my stage band, so I figured, well, I'll write them and I'll play them when I play them. It's not like we lack any songs to play on a stage."**

Longtime fans fretted that Dylan wasn't introducing new songs in concert. The reason, he says, was simple: **"I don't like to bring out new material because of the bootleg situation."** Yet backstage and at sound checks, extraordinary new songs were taking shape.

Time Out of Mind (Columbia) is bleak and riveting. Its 11 songs are about the loneliness, anger and desolation of lost love, and about looming mortality. (The album was recorded before Dylan was hospitalized over the summer with a life-threatening heart infection.)

"*I've been walking through the middle of nowhere, trying to get to heaven before they close the door*" Dylan sings. He has rarely sounded optimistic; spite and self-righteous contempt animate many of his best songs. But fewer comforts than ever.

"Environment affects me a great deal," Dylan says. **"A lot of the songs were written after the sun went down. And I like storms, I like to stay up during a storm. I get very meditative sometimes, and this one phrase was going through my head: 'Work while the day lasts, because the night of death cometh when no man can work. ' I don't recall where I heard it. I like preaching, I hear a lot of preaching, and I probably just heard it somewhere. Maybe it's in Psalms, it beats me. But it wouldn't let me go. I was, like, what does that phrase mean? But it was at the forefront of my mind, for a long period of time, and I think a lot of that is instilled into this record."**

Many of the songs echo the chord structures of 1960s classics like *Ballad of a Thin Man* and *Just Like a Woman*, but with the youthful cockiness of those sessions turned inside out. The producer Daniel Lanois (who has also worked with U2, Peter Gabriel and Emmylou Harris) makes the band sound as if it is coalescing on the spot. Instruments enter one by one, feeling their way into the tunes as if they're sneaking into a speak-easy jam session.

Yet the impromptu, unsettled sound is a very deliberate choice. **"I wasn't interested in making a record that took the songs and made them into a contemporary setting,"** Dylan says. **"My music, my songs, they have very little to do with technology. They either work or they don't work. Daniel and I made that record *Oh Mercy* a while back, and that was pretty good at the time. But these songs, I felt, were more all-encompassing. They were more filled with the dread realities of life."**

"Many of my records are more or less blueprints for the songs. This time, I didn't want blueprints, I wanted the real thing. When the songs are done right they're done right, and that's it. They're written in stone when they're done right."

Instead of constructing the music layer by layer, Dylan worked through the songs with his musicians, including the Tex-Mex electric-organ legend Augie Meyers, the guitarist Duke Robillard and the linchpin of Dylan's touring band, Tony Garnier on bass. Nearly everything on the album, including vocals, was recorded live in the studio.

"We all know what the thing should sound like. We're just getting further and further away from it," Dylan says. **"I wanted something that goes through the technology and comes out the other end before the technology knows what it's doing."**

The purposely unpolished music – clattering rockabilly drums and ricocheting guitars in *Cold Irons Bound*, loping blues with raw guitar jabs in *'Til I Fell in Love With You*, slinky electric piano over a reggae backbeat in *Love Sick*, tentative gospel in *Tryin' to Get to Heaven* – has a haunted, precarious tone that connects it to the most harrowing depths of the blues.

The blues has always been a Dylan touchstone, for both words and music. In many ways, his groundbreaking 1960s songs were transmuted blues, from the surreal juxtapositions of the lyrics to the rough-hewn vocals to the blues bands he hired when he plugged in.

Throughout *Time Out of Mind*, Dylan quotes hoary blues lines like "*Going down the road feeling bad*." And in his maturity, he is closer than ever to the clear-eyed fatalism of classic blues. In song after song, the singer walks down dark, empty roads, muttering accusations at a woman who left him; he's still wishing she would come back and wondering, in one song, whether he would kiss her or kill her if she did.

When he's not brooding over shattered romance, he's feeling his age and contemplating death. In the 17-minute *Highlands*, he watches young people drinking and dancing, and his voice grows hollow with sadness: "*I'd trade places with any of 'em in a minute if I could*."

"I can't help those feelings," he says. **"I'm not going to try to make a fake Pollyanna view. Why would I even want to? And I'm not going to deny them just because they might be a little dismal to look at. I try to let it speak for itself, but I'm not emotionally involved in it. I can deliver the message. I learned a while ago not to get personally involved, because if you're personally involved you're going to go over the top."**

Watching his son Jakob turn into a multimillion-selling hit maker, Dylan tempers his pride with caution. **"He's had an amazing amount of success in a short time,"** Dylan says. **"I just don't want to see his heart get broken in this business, that's all."**

For Dylan, the songs he grew up on continue to provide the models, and the yardstick, for his own music; *Good as I Been to You* and *World Gone Wrong* only strengthened the connection. **"My songs come out of folk music,"** he says. **"I love that whole pantheon. To me there's no difference between Muddy Waters and Bill Monroe."**

Going through the tracks on *Time Out of Mind*, he points out what he borrowed: among other things, a jug-band guitar line in *Not Dark Yet*, an inverted rockabilly lick in *Dirt Road Blues*, and a riff and a country-blues lilt from Charley Patton in *Highlands*.

"There's a lot of clever people around who write songs," Dylan says. **"My songs, what makes them different is that there's a foundation to them. That's why they're still around, that's why**

my songs are still being performed. It's not because they're such great songs. They don't fall into the commercial category. They're not written to be performed by other people. But they're standing on a strong foundation, and subliminally that's what people are hearing."

"Those old songs are my lexicon and my prayer book," he adds. **"All my beliefs come out of those old songs, literally, anything from *Let Me Rest on That Peaceful Mountain* to *Keep on the Sunny Side*. You can find all my philosophy in those old songs. I believe in a God of time and space, but if people ask me about that, my impulse is to point them back toward those songs. I believe in Hank Williams singing *I Saw the Light*. I've seen the light, too."** Dylan says he now subscribes to no organized religion.

While Dylan idolized the likes of Mississippi John Hurt and Jimmy Rodgers in the 1960s, he has now achieved their kind of gravity himself. If anything, he sounds more woeful. The voice of a generation has become a voice of experience, telling us that experience hasn't taught him anything he needs. Explicitly or not, the blues and folk masters offered their own survival as reassurance.

But on *Time Out of Mind*, Dylan refuses listeners that solace; he often sounds as if he would welcome death. "*It's not dark yet, but it's getting there*" he sings, unguarded and matter-of-fact.

"I've written some songs that I look at, and they just give me a sense of awe," Dylan says **"Stuff like, *It's Alright, Ma*, just the alliteration in that blows me away. And I can also look back and know where I was tricky and where I was really saying something that just happened to have a spark of poetry to it."**

"But when you get beyond a certain year, after you go on for a certain number of years, you realize, hey, life is kind of short anyway. And you might as well say the way you feel."

September 1997
Edna Gundersen Interview, Santa Monica, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1119-1127.

In the week commencing 21st September 1997, Dylan gave three press interviews, to John Pareles, Edna Gundersen and David Gates, essentially in support of *Time Out Of Mind*. These interviews took place in a Santa Monica hotel suite, facing the Pacific Ocean and booked by his publicist, Elliot Mintz.

The second interview appeared on the front of the "Life" section of *USA Today* for Monday 29 September 1997. It is by Edna Gundersen, who also wrote two adjacent pieces, one a review of *Time Out Of Mind* and the other a report on the Bologna appearance, The latter contains a color photograph of that event and more quotes from the interview itself.

As might be suspected, there is some similarity in content between the three but the words used by Dylan are not identical, suggesting that they were indeed three separate interviews.

[taken from *Wicked Messenger* No. 3816]

It later transpired that there was more to the Gundersen interview than published in *USA Today*. A far larger version, presumably the whole interview, appeared on the newspaper's web page. This is reproduced below, after the published interview.

AT THE HEART OF DYLAN

Heartache. The word literally and figuratively defines Bob Dylan in 1997. After surviving a life-threatening cardiac infection, he is resuming his storied career with a powerful album about lost love and dwindling hope.

Time Out of Mind, in stores Tuesday, examines mortality and heartbreak in 11 raw and potent tracks. Though finished long before Dylan was hospitalized, the lyrics carry added resonance in light of his illness.

Disciples will ruminate over lines like "*When you think you've lost everything, you find you can lose a little more,*" "*It's not dark yet but it's getting there*" and "*I was on anything but a roll.*"

At 56, nearly four decades after his first public appearances, Dylan is on a roll. A chorus of praise greets *Time Out of Mind*: A+ in *Entertainment Weekly*, **** in *Rolling Stone*, "his best sustained work since the mid-1970s," raves *The New York Times*. He's *Newsweek's* cover boy. On Saturday, he played for the Pope. In December, he'll become the first rock star anointed a Kennedy Center honoree.

Dylan, slim and natty in a black shirt, slacks and patent leather loafers, seems anything but morose during a rare interview. His clear blue eyes, ready smile and animated demeanor suggest good health and high spirits. He is quick to discourage analysts who'd dismantle his songs for clues about death and despair.

"I don't think they should or could be interpreted that way, if at all," he says, his back to a hotel window that frames the Pacific sunset. **"You can't interpret a Hank Williams song. He's done the interpretation and the performance, and that's it. Now it's for the listener to decide**

if it moves him or not. That's something you don't even decide. That happens to you unconsciously."

"I let the songs fly, and people respond. Whether they make a valid interpretation or look at it with a false eye, I'm not concerned with that. "

Nor is the ferociously private Dylan willing to expound on *Time's* tales of shattered romance, except to acknowledge that the songs are drawn from personal experience.

"I can identify with other people and situations, but I tend not to," he says. **"I would rather recall things from my own life, and I don't have to force myself... Just being in certain environments triggers a response in my brain, a certain feeling I want to articulate. For some reason, I am attracted to self-destruction. I know that personal sacrifice has a great deal to do with how we live or don't live our lives."**

"These songs are not allegorical," Dylan stresses. **"I have given that up... Philosophical dogma doesn't interest me."**

Pop's most scrutinized yet inscrutable artist doesn't deny his mercurial nature or his disdain for the labels of rebel, poet and prophet. Though he radically transformed folk, rock and the singer/songwriter genre in the '60s, he refuses to clone seminal works and adopts a humble stance.

"I don't consider myself a songwriter in the sense of Townes Van Zandt or Randy Newman," he says. **"I'm not Paul Simon. I can't do that. My songs come out of folk music and early rock n' roll, and that's it. I'm not a classical lyricist, I'm not a meticulous lyricist. I don't write melodies that are clever or catchy. It's all very traditionally documented."**

The most influential songwriter of modern times recognizes that his mass appeal has waned. **"I'm under the impression that people aren't really paying attention to my records,"** he says. **"I'm aware that I don't sell records like I did in the '80s or the '70s, and that's OK as long as I can play, and the right crowd is going to come and see it properly. I don't follow what records are at the top of the charts. I ceased doing that a long, long time ago."**

He does, however, take notice of rising son Jakob, whose band the Wallflowers, No. 31 after 64 weeks on Billboard's chart, commercially outranks his dad's '90s output.

"I'm proud of his accomplishments," Dylan says **"He's still young, and he's come a long way in a short time. I worried about him when he started out. I just didn't want to see him get roughed up. This business can throw you into deep water."**

The murkiest depths? Celebrity. **"It mortifies me to even think that I am a celebrity,"** Dylan says. **"I'm not one, and I never want to be one. I lead a very insular existence. It's different on stage, because those people look at me as a performer."**

"By being a celebrity, you lose your anonymity. It short-circuits your creative powers when people come up and interrupt your train of thought. They consider you completely approachable. And you can't be rude to people, so basically you shut yourself down. I know I do. I shut myself down when people come up and want to shake my hand or want to talk. That's just dead time."

Dylan avoids the press, loathes photo sessions and steadily releases records with scant promotion.

Time contains his first batch of originals since 1990's *Under the Red Sky*. Since then, he has released a boxed set of rarities, his third greatest hits album, an *MTV Unplugged*, and two collections of vintage folk and blues, 1992's *Good as I Been to You* and 1993's *World Gone Wrong*.

Making *Time* was a liberating experience for Dylan, who can feel burdened by the weight of his legend. The classics he performs on stage **"are proven to be true and strong, otherwise I couldn't sing them night after night,"** he says. **"It's not like I can eclipse that."**

"I'm not looking to do that, but to record new songs, they have to be in that arena, and that's why it took a long time. I was constantly thinking, will these songs stand up to what I'm playing night after night?"

Dylan considers his early records roughly sketched prototypes that later matured onstage. Produced by Daniel Lanois last January in a Miami studio, the new songs were captured live with sidemen schooled in low-tech production.

"This record is not a blueprint," Dylan says. **"This is it. This is the way these songs should go, every single last one. This record went through evolutions. What you hear comes through that whole maze, that labyrinth of fire that it takes to perfect the arrangement and structure."**

"There is nothing contemporary about it. There is no trickery. We went back to the way a primitive record was made, before the advent of technology. It's almost a revolutionary concept these days."

The man who shocked the folk rank and file by plugging in now worries that high-watt noise is eradicating traditional American music.

"You see all this electricity speaking, all this wizardry," he says. **"Pull out the plugs and probably very few of these people could move you, because they can't play. They are dominated by the electricity. Guys like Elmore James played acoustically and used electricity so they could be heard in a crowded room. They weren't depending on electricity to hide talent they didn't have. I don't want a bunch of flaky sounds. It's a dead end."**

Dylan was still sequencing Time tracks when he was stricken with chest pains in May. He was declared fit after an initial medical exam.

"I accepted that, but the pain didn't go away," he says. **"It was intolerable pain, where it affects your breathing every waking moment."**

He entered a hospital May 25 and was diagnosed with pericarditis, a swelling of the sac around the heart, brought on by a fungal infection called histoplasmosis. Dylan spent six weeks off his feet. His brush with death brought delirium and ennui but no spiritual revelations.

"I didn't have any philosophical, profound thoughts," he says. **"The pain stopped me in my tracks and fried my mind. I was so sick my mind just blanked out. I'm getting better; that's all I can say right now."**

The alignment of events this year – his health scare, broad acclaim for *Time Out of Mind*, the papal encounter – has magnified Dylan's star power and fed an ongoing deification that he finds perplexing. In 1990, he received France's highest cultural honor. The next year, he got

Grammy's lifetime achievement award. And in 1992, an all-star concert, pay-per-view and compilation album toasted his 30th anniversary as a recording artist.

Such honors **"are unexpected and unsolicited, and I'm not nonchalant about it, because in some sense it really does matter,"** he says. **"I'm very appreciative."**

But he's leery of the hype. Dozens of books are devoted to the enigmatic troubadour. He doesn't read them.

"I'm not going to read a book about myself," he says with a chuckle. **"I mean, why? I'm with myself enough. I wake up every day and I'm still me. It would be torture to read about myself. I would rather read about anybody else but me."**

<u>And now what appears to be the interview proper from which the above was taken.</u>

EG: How are you feeling?

BD: I'm feeling better. It's a slow process of getting altogether better. I'm not sure if I'm going to get altogether better. Wherever that altogether place is, I'm heading towards it.

EG: How did this medical crisis unfold?

BD: We hit a freak storm on the Ohio River, and I guess I got a really bad taste of it. It went into the wrong area. When a virus goes in your stomach, you can get rid of it easier. Mine went into [my heart]**, where there is no way to flush it out. It got unbearable.**

EG: Were you reluctant to go to a hospital?

BD: No. I had complained that I had pain, and the pain was diagnosed as insufficient to do anything about. I accepted that, but the pain didn't go away. It puts you in a frame of mind that you can't imagine. Pain can do that to you. It was intolerable pain, where it affects your breathing every waking moment. I couldn't sleep. In the early stages when it first came on me, I thought it might be a heart problem and I didn't want to jeopardize my health by taking anything to go to sleep.

EG: People who experience a brush with death often feel transformed in some way. Was that your experience?

BD: No, no. I was so sick, my mind was just blanked out. Once I got rid of the pain, I had to recuperate by just lying low for weeks and weeks and weeks, unable to even step around my yard. I didn't have any philosophical, profound thoughts, really. All those thoughts happened when I was going through the pain. It stopped me in my tracks. It fried my mind. I'm getting better, that's all I can say right now. I don't know what tomorrow's going to bring.

EG: How did being sick impact the making of *Time Out of Mind*?

BD: The record was recorded in January and the songs were written before then. We didn't really do anymore after that. It was just a question then of what songs were going to be placed on it and left off. When I got sick, I let it go at that point. I didn't have the energy to decide anymore. Up to that point, we were working on it, shuffling some songs around, when this happened to me. I was a little bit confused at that point. I wasn't really sure what the final outcome was going to look like. I decided that whatever it was before I got sick, that was the way it would be.

EG: Are you pleased with the album?

BD: I think so. It says what it needs to say. We did most of the things that we tried to do, in terms of how we needed to put these songs across. They are not the types of songs you hear every day, and they needed some thought going into how they should sound. I think they sound like they were meant to be played.

EG: Is this record a natural extension of the two vintage-folk collections you recorded before it?

BD: No, those records were made in a different time, a different place and with a different purpose. This particular set of songs had more compatible musicians who played everything live. There is no trickery to it. I mean, Dan [Lanois] **has his wizardry that he does. But there is nothing contemporary about this record. We went back to the way a primitive record was made, before the advent of technology. It takes a certain amount of bravery to do that. And it takes musicians who understand the process. It's almost a revolutionary concept these days. Usually everyone has his own little space. We disregarded all that, so there is no separate tracking, which is very unorthodox. We'd put two or three instruments through one amplifier. You won't find that being done, but it all adds up to a certain effect. And the whole record is live. That adds a certain ambience to everything. We had open mikes in a very big room. You get an echo of the guitar and it fits in somewhere.**

EG: Was Lanois immediately receptive to your approach?

BD: We talked about this last June [1996]**. I had the songs for a while, and I was reluctant to record them, because I didn't want to come out with a contemporary-sounding record. I didn't feel that type of sound would be useful for these songs. So we came to an understanding that these should have an identifiable sound and that sound should not be a futuristic type of sound, but more traditional, like a record on a record player as opposed to a CD you hear on a fabulous sound system. Dan makes very stately-sounding records, so he is perfect for serving the song. He's just interested in the song, not the personalities or any fabrications or iconic things. Is the song there? That's all he cares about, and then he can work that magic.**

EG: Were these songs written in one unbroken block of time?

BD: No. I write on the road. I write thoughts and things down. Then I'll get somewhere and look at it and see what it seems to be saying. A lot of people can't do that on the road, but I like the movement. I have a band all the time, so we can always play it here and there. If I want to see how something is going to sound, I can hear it right. There was no pressure on me to write these songs. There was no one breathing down my neck to make this record. So like everything else, it happened when I had the time.

EG: How autobiographical are these songs?

BD: I recall these things from my whole life. I can identify with different people and different situations, and if I want to go that way, I can, but I tend not to. I would rather recall something from memory. I don't have to force myself, because just being in certain environments triggers some kind of response in my brain of a certain feeling I want to articulate. These songs are not allegorical. I have given that up. I don't even want to go into that area anymore. Philosophical dogma doesn't interest me.

EG: How did the song Highlands take shape? I understand the musicians didn't hear the lyrics until the song was being recorded.

BD: I don't think we had a full ensemble playing on that, as I remember. There can't be more than four people playing. I can't say that the musicians didn't know the song or the lyrics. I don't know. They all understand this kind of music. Every musician there was compatible with this kind of music. I mean, I can listen to Jimmie Rodgers, and then I can listen to Robert Johnson, and I don't hear any dichotomy. It all comes to the same place.

Highlands **was not a melodic song. It's an old country guitar pattern that you don't hear every day. That's what makes it kind of hypnotic. Nobody has extracted a pattern like that and played it with a certain rhythm. It's more country, and it's older, and that's why it mystifies you. It's got that hypnotism that sounds like it would go on forever. And that's the point. It can go on forever.**

EG: It shifts from humor to despair to surreal vignettes and yet seems very cohesive in the end. Did you compose the lyrics in one sitting?

BD: No. That particular song, if you want to call it a song, had a lot of lyrics to it. You hear maybe one third of all the lyrics to it. Nobody had gone to this area before, and I

thought, let's go there. I didn't think anything like this had ever been captured on tape. I had to scramble around to find the right types of lyrics and basically moved lyrics around and put together the puzzle. It might sound Byzantine in its way, but it seems to make sense, doesn't it?

EG: Themes of heartbreak and mortality seem to thread through every song. Did you intend to convey those issues?

BD: Not really. I'm not responsible for the interpretation. I don't think they should or could be interpreted that way, if at all. You can't interpret a Hank Williams song. He's done the interpretation and the performance, and that's it. Now it's for the listener to decide if it moves him or not. That's something you don't even decide. That happens to you unconsciously.

EG: Do you put much stock into the opinions listeners hold?

BD: I find a lot of people say they like one thing but in reality they like another. Whatever somebody professes on one hand, a lot of times if you penetrate into their inner beings, they are not so enthralled with that. You ask about mortality. The soul has a worth, but we don't know what the intrinsic value of a soul is. Nobody knows and nobody even wants to think about it. But people do think about it in their innermost spirit, whether they say they do or don't. I let the songs fly and people respond. Whether they make a valid interpretation or look at it with a false eye, I'm not concerned with that.

EG: Do these songs lend themselves to the stage, and will you be playing them on tour?

BD: Absolutely. I don't record a record and then go on tour and play it. But eventually the songs find their way into my stage show, one by one. That means something else will have to go. This record is not a blueprint. This is it. This is the way these songs should go, every single last one. This record went through different evolutions. What you hear comes through that whole maze, that labyrinth of fire that it takes to perfect the arrangement and the structure.

EG: Do you worry that new songs don't hold up against such classics as *Like a Rolling Stone* and *Mr. Tambourine Man*?

BD: The songs I play night after night are proven to be true and strong. Otherwise I couldn't sing them night after night. They can be performed over and over because there is a truth in them. It's not like I can do anything to eclipse that. It's not going to happen. I'm not looking to do that. But in order to record new songs, they have to be in that arena, but not on any superficial level. So that's why it took a long time. I was constantly thinking, "Am I really going to accomplish something? Will any of these songs stand up with what I'm playing night after night?"

EG: Was there something particular you wanted to say when you were putting these songs together and forming this album?

BD: For some reason, I am attracted to self-destruction. I know that personal sacrifice has a great deal to do with how we live or don't live our lives. Maybe in the back of my mind, I was thinking that.

EG: You have been on the road almost nonstop in recent years. Do you still have a strong commitment to touring?

BD: I'm comfortable out there. In America, that is. I'm not sure I want to continue touring overseas. Being on the road to me is just as natural as breathing. It's rewarding to thrill the crowd. That's all I can tell you about it. I never think about the shows after they're done.

EG: You've been hailed as one of this century's greatest songwriters, yet you tend to accept the praise reluctantly. Why?

BD: I don't consider myself a songwriter in the sense of Townes Van Zandt or Randy Newman. I'm not Paul Simon. I can't do that. My songs come out of folk music and early rock n' roll, and that's it, no more. That's the foundation. I'm not a classical lyricist. I'm not a meticulous lyricist. I don't write melodies that are clever or catchy. It's all very traditionally documented.

EG: What keeps you close to those roots?

BD: I'm constantly listening to [early folk]**. I have never strayed from the path of that old traditional music.**

EG: Do you agree that the songs on *Time Out of Mind* are more emotionally raw and direct than anything you've done in the past?

BD: Yeah. I have always had it in me to do it, but I never really gave myself the opportunity. Opportunities don't last forever, but I had to wait for the right time. I always felt I wanted to make a record the way I like to hear a record. All these songs could have been recorded with a different producer and in a different place and time, but they wouldn't jump at you like they do. I was tired of the old [recording] **methods. I hadn't recorded for a long time, because I really couldn't find somebody who could work with me in some other role besides patrician.**

EG: Are you dissatisfied with some of the records you've made in the past?

BD: Oh, yeah. I can't say that I've made any great-sounding records. A lot of the older songs were just blueprints for what I'd play later on the stage. Jerry Garcia proved that to me. He took a lot of the songs and actually recorded them and sang them a step further than they were on my records. He heard where they should go. I would hear his versions of songs of mine and I'd say, "OK, I understand how it should go." Then I would play that and might even take it a step further. There have been other artists who have recorded my songs and shown me the way the song should go.

EG: Are you surprised by the amount of attention the new album is drawing?

BD: There are plenty of other people out there getting attention. I'm under the impression that people aren't really paying attention to my records. I'm aware that I don't sell records like I did in the '80s or the '70s, and that's OK as long as I can play and the right crowd is going to come and see it properly. I don't follow what records are at the top of the charts. I ceased doing that a long, long time ago.

EG: On your last album, you wrote in the liner notes that technology now exists that can wipe out the truth. Are you worried that high tech is threatening folk tradition?

BD: Very much so. You see all this electricity speaking, all this wizardry, all these pedals on stage. Pull out the plugs and probably very few of these people could move you, because they can't play. They are dominated by the electricity. Guys like Elmore James played acoustically and used electricity so they could be heard in a crowded room. They weren't depending on electricity to hide talent they didn't have. I don't want a bunch of flaky sounds. It's a dead end. It's dead weight.

EG: The last show you did before you were hospitalized was a Jewish benefit. You played in a Buddhist temple a few years back, and now you're performing for the pope. Naturally, fans are speculating again about your religious stance.

BD: I don't know what people are wondering about. I've always felt an unseen presence, all the time, ever since I was small. I'm not a big fan of diversity. Everyone has a heart. We breathe the same air. We have the same organs. That unifies us. I play where I am asked to play. Playing for the pope is just a show. I don't judge who asks me to play. That's not my position. I'm grateful to be asked for whatever reason.

EG: How do you feel about fans who were outraged when you sold rights to *The Times They Are A-Changin'* to an accounting firm?

BD: It depends on who they are. It depends on who is saying it. Let's check them out, let's see what their values are. Before they start to criticize, let's see how deep their sins run. I don't know how to respond to something like that It really doesn't even enter my mind. I have no feelings against [selling song rights]**, especially songs that are like 40 years old.**

EG: You've been playing guitar a great deal more lately, both on record and on stage. Does this reflect a new passion for the instrument?

BD: Hmm, I play stuff. It's not incidental stuff and it's not inconsequential. I don't play lead guitar, like you have probably heard a lot of people say. I don't see that. What I do is

restructure a song and my guitar is more or less like my vocal style. It's really only based on a structure, and I don't vary from that structure, ever. I used to look for someone to do that in my band, and I couldn't get anybody to do it, to just play the structure of the song. It's not lead guitar in any sense of the word. My guitar playing isn't really noteworthy in any way. It only works in my musical setting.

EG: More books have been written about you than any other 20th-century songwriter. Do you check out the biographies about you?

BD: I m not going to read a book about myself. I mean, why? I'm with myself enough. I wake up every day and I'm still me. It would be torture to read about myself. I would rather read about anybody else but me.

EG: Why don't you do more interviews?

BD: I'm not uncomfortable doing interviews, but it would be preferable to me that I just do one interview because you don't want to tell the same thing to every person interviewing you, and I run out of things to say. When I used to do more interviews, I found myself saying the same thing over and over. I was like, enough of this. This is stupid. Besides, there is already so much written about me. We'll be booked in a town, and there's two pages of the newspaper devoted to me. For the amount of space they give to these essays, you'd think I was selling out 12 Madison Square Gardens. They've got me in this celebrity category. Well, I'm not a celebrity, really. I lead a very insular existence. I don't want to be a celebrity. I'm not one, and I don't ever want to be one. It mortifies me to even think I am a celebrity.

EG: Why does it mortify you?

BD: Because basically you lose your anonymity, and it's a dreadful thing to do that. It short-circuits your creative powers when people come up and interrupt your train of thought. They consider you completely approachable. And you can't be rude to come up and want to shake my hand or want to talk. That's just dead time.

EG: For someone with your kind of fame, how have you managed to keep your private life so private?

BD: If we [hadn't had] **to cancel those shows** [in Europe in June]**, you would never have known I was sick, because I most likely wouldn't have told anyone. Those shows were like two days away, and I was ready to make those shows that's how sick I was. I was out of my mind. I didn't tell anybody that I was sick, even though I could not function, I could not walk. I just don't talk to make small talk. I really don't feel I have to shield anything. My motivation is to go out and thrill people night after night on the stage. The other side is a side I've never cultivated.**

EG: Your son Jakob has been very much in the spotlight this year. Do you worry about him?

BD: I'm proud of his accomplishments. He's still young, and he's come a long way in a short time. I worried about him when he started out. I just didn't want to see him get roughed up. This business can really throw you into deep water. He's had his ups and downs. What he does with the future remains to be seen, but he and his band have done rather well. In [the] **contemporary music scene, they have got a voice to be heard.**

EG: What about your own future?

BD: When I'm off the road and not playing, I can't say I truly miss it. But once I get out there, I realize that this is what I'm supposed to do. I have an inner exhilaration by doing it. And I can step to it without any down time real quick. We don't have to seclude ourselves and gear up and rehearse for two months and make such a big deal out of touring. It's relatively effortless. But I may wake up saying that I'm never going to do it again, not because there is any kind of harshness to it, but because that's the way I am. I'm different all the time. Talk to me tomorrow and I'll give you different answers to the same questions. I'm not the same person from one hour to the next.

September 1997
David Gates Interview, Santa Monica, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1129-1134.

In the week commencing 21st September 1997, Dylan gave three press interviews, to John Pareles, Edna Gundersen and David Gates, essentially in support of *Time Out Of Mind*. These interviews took place in a Santa Monica hotel suite, facing the Pacific Ocean and booked by his publicist, Elliot Mintz.

The third interview, by David Gates, appeared as the cover story of the 6 October 1997 US edition of *Newsweek*. The cover photograph was taken by Richard Avedon, in a proper photographic studio by all accounts. Unfortunately, this photograph does not appear on the cover of the 13 October international edition but it does contain the interview itself.

As might be suspected, there is some similarity in content between the three but the words used by Dylan are not identical, suggesting that they were indeed three separate interviews.

[taken from *Wicked Messenger* No. 3816]

DYLAN REVISITED

Bob Dylan has reinvented himself all his life. Now he's back – from a near-fatal illness and a near-terminal career slump – with his best record in years. How does it feel? We asked him. He told us.

AS YOU SIT ACROSS FROM HTM, HIS FACE KEEPS CHANGING. Sometimes it's that I-see-right-through-you look from the cover of *Highway 61 Revisited* – you barely notice the white hairs among the curls, the two days' worth of stubble and the 30 years' worth of lines. Now he turns his head: there's the profile from *Blood on the Tracks*. Now he thrusts his chin up, and he's the funny, defiant kid who used to wear that Bob Dylan cap. Well, he is Bob Dylan. The man who did to popular music what Einstein did to physics. The incarnation of the counterculture. The songwriter of the century. Sitting right there. So what's on his mind?

It turns out that he loves to talk about Merle Haggard and early Elvis. Or Brian Wilson: **"That ear – I mean, Jesus, he's got to will that to the Smithsonian."** Or Sinatra: **"The tone of his voice. It's like a cello. Me and Don Was wanted to record him doing Hank Williams songs. I don't know, for some reason or other it never got off the ground."**

And when it comes to musical arcana, he knows the secret handshakes. Somehow you get talking about the old country duo Johnnie and Jack, and how Jack died in a car crash. **"Car crash goin' to Patsy Cline's funeral"** he chimes in. Bingo.

But you're really here, in an oceanfront hotel in LA, to talk about the record he's releasing this week, *Time Out of Mind* completed before his widely reported death scare last spring, it's got that album-of-the-year buzz publicists can help along some but not create. But there's stuff he's put off-limits – where he lives, his children – and stuff you just know not to ask. What did those black and white loafers set him back? Is he still in touch with his ex-wife? In fact, he seems near the edge of his comfort zone talking about why he's not talking about one of his most illegible back pages: that conservative, born-again Christian phase that blindsided his liberal, secular fan base some 15 years ago. **"It's not tangible to me,"** he says. **"I don't think I'm tangible to myself. I mean, I think one thing today and I think another thing tomorrow. I change during the course of a day. I wake and I'm one person, and when I go to sleep I know for certain I'm**

somebody else. I don't know who I am most of the time. It doesn't even matter to me." This cracks him up.

Then he says, **"Here's the thing with me and the religious thing. This is the flat-out truth: I find the religiosity and philosophy in the music. I don't find it anywhere else. Songs like *Let Me Rest on a Peaceful Mountain* or *I Saw the Light* – that's my religion. I don't adhere to rabbis, preachers, evangelists, all of that. I've learned more from the songs than I've learned from any of this kind of entity. The songs are my lexicon. I believe the songs."**

Bob Dylan is 56. Last May when he almost died – of a viral infection in the sac around the heart – Columbia Records got 500 calls in a single day. Earlier this year Greil Marcus's much discussed *Invisible Republic*, a study of Dylan's 1967 *Basement Tapes*, rightly ranked his music with "the most intense outbreaks of twentieth-century modernism"; the death scare reminded us that Dylan is a major cultural figure – and that we won't always have him with us. But for Dylan himself, deep thoughts about mortality had to take a back seat. **"Mostly I was in a lot of pain. Pain that was intolerable. That's the only way I can put it."** By August, though, he was back on tour again, lightheaded from his medication but sounding none the worse for wear.

Last weekend Dylan performed before the pope, reportedly at John Paul's own request, at a Eucharistic Conference in Bologna. John Paul listened, eyes closed, to *Knockin' on Heaven's Door* and the apocalyptic *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*; then Dylan doffed his white Stetson, shook the Pope's hand and sang *Forever Young*. In December he'll receive a Kennedy Center Honors award, with President Clinton in attendance. Will he have to speak? **"No, they say I don't have to do a thing, which is"** – he laughs – **"perfect for me."**

Dylan's been fitfully rebuilding his career for the past decade, after starring in the stillborn 1987 film *Hearts of Fire*, a knockoff of *A Star Is Born*, and releasing such disappointing (though underrated) albums as 1988's *Down in the Groove*. He's had triumphant media moments: his 1988 collaboration with Tom Petty, George Harrison and Roy Orbison as the Traveling Wilburys, his all-star 30th Anniversary Celebration at Madison Square Garden in 1992, winning over critics in 1993 shows at Manhattan's Supper Club, holding his own with Metallica and Nine Inch Nails at Woodstock '94, his tight, audience-friendly 1994 set for *MTV Unplugged*. But more important are the 100 or so ordinary concerts he plays, year in, year out, on his Never-Ending Tour (which he says ended in 1991) and its successors, to which he's given such names as the *Why Do You Look at Me So Strangely Tour*.

And he's newly famous as the father of the Wallflowers' Jakob Dylan. **"I know they've sold a ton of records,"** says Dylan, who's **"superstitious"** about discussing family members. **"I keep hearing that they're playing arenas or whatever with the Counting the Crows group."** Did he try to interest Jakob in old blues and hillbilly music? **"Yeah, he's heard the records. He has different likes because he was born at a different time – but sure, if he wants to hear good old-timey records, they're easily available to him."** Do we take it he'd rather not comment on the Wallflowers' music? He laughs, either at your discomfiture or his, and – honest to Pete – the phone rings. (He can't help it if he's lucky.) OK, so has he heard Counting Crows, whose "Mr. Jones" alludes to his *Ballad of a Thin Man* and has the line "*I want to be Bob Dylan*"? **"I have heard them,"** he says, **"but I get them mixed up with somebody else."** The few things he catches on the radio anymore sound "weak and hopeless" – and disposable. **"The top stars of today, you won't even know their names two years from now. Four, five years from now, they'll be obliterated. It's all flaky to me."**

This is the marketplace to whose vagaries he's committing *Time Out of Mind*. It's the first collection of his own new songs in six years – some Dylan-watchers feared there might never be another one – and maybe the best since 1975's *Blood on the Tracks*. His last two records,

Good as I Been to You (1992) and the Grammy-winning *World Gone Wrong* (1993), were solo acoustic versions of blues and folk songs; *Time Out of Mind* should appeal to a wider audience. It's far more accessible than such thorny later masterworks as *Infidels* (1983) – though it may also be his darkest record ever.

Producer Daniel Lanois, who also worked on Dylan's 1989 *Oh Mercy*, says he "asked Bob to step into the future" with such technological conveniences as tape-looped rhythm tracks. Dylan hoped to push back the clock. He structured one song around a guitar line in the Memphis Jug Band's 1929 *KC. Moan*, and he wanted his vocals to pack the punch of old recordings. "Bob would say to me, 'Little Richard's voice really cuts'." (In his 1959 Hibbing, Min., high-school yearbook, Robert Zimmerman said his ambition was "to join the band of Little Richard.") Both the forward-looking Lanois and the backward looking Dylan got their way.

Time Out of Mind is a spare, spooky sounding album, its lyrics brutally plainspoken instead of "Dylanesque": "*My sense of humanity has gone down the drain*," he sings in *Not Dark Yet*. It's about hopelessly lost love, about endless wandering – its first three songs begin with the singer walking – about an aging man's increasing distance from his world. "*I got new eyes/Everything looks far away*." The landscape is hot and arid, and though there's no one around, he's "*beginning to hear voices*" and "*listening to every mind-polluting word*." Dylan's own voice sounds appropriately murky, ravaged, distorted. "We treated the voice almost like a harmonica" says Lanois, "when you over-drive it through a small guitar amplifier."

Hard-core Dylan freaks can be contrary; they may join the crowd and proclaim *Time Out of Mind* the long-awaited best since-*Blood*, or they may find it too accessible. But the last song, the 16½ minute *Highlands*, should poleax everybody: it's a Thurber daydream with a Beckett narrator ("*talking to myself in a monologue*"), a Robert Burns refrain and a hypnotic guitar hook from Charlie Patton. In this funny, grim, crepuscular saga, the yearning for human connection gives way, with regret, to a yearning for transcendence. **"Nobody knew what to make of it,"** says Dylan. Lanois, for better or worse, talked him out of a 21 minute version.

"It is a spooky record," says Dylan, **"because I feel spooky. I don't feel in tune with anything."** Yet he's proud of having registered his ambivalence and alienation so nakedly. **"I don't think it eclipses anything from my earlier period. But I think it might be shocking in its bluntness. There isn't any waste. There's no line that has to be there to get to another line. There's no pointless playing with somebody's brain. I think it's going to reach the people it needs to reach, and the ones it doesn't, maybe they'll come along another day."**

Some 50 years ago Dylan's work mattered more intensely to more people than anyone's does today. "*He not busy being born is busy dying*," he sang, and young people yearning for a role model and an imaginary friend hung on every word as he took on and shucked off persona after persona: the new Woody Guthrie, the voice of the Movement, the rock-and-roll Fellini, the poet of the bad trip and the doomed love affair, the minimalist mystic, the back-to-basics country boy. Fans flattered themselves that they were going through the same changes. **"I never figured my music to blend into the culture in any kind of way,"** Dylan says now. But back then it was hard to tell whether he was mirroring '60s youth culture or actually creating it. He offered ready-to-wear attitudes and ready-to-cherish slogans. "*Even the President of the United States sometimes must have to stand naked*." "*Leave your stepping-stones behind*." And – paradoxically – "*Don't follow leaders*."

Dylan's early political songs – *The Times They Are a-Changin'*, *Masters of War* – belong to their era but the electric music he invented in the mid-'60s is still in our faces. He set modern poetry – confessional, gnomic, comic, denunciatory, prophetic, visionary – to ecstatically danceable rock and roll. John Lennon said Dylan's music transformed the Beatles; today, everyone from

R.E.M. to Beck to sedulously unlistenable art-metal bands shrieking out Tourettean lyrics over chainsaw guitar is doing what he made thinkable.

Dylan insists he's not a poet – **"Wordsworth's a poet, Shelley's a poet, Allen Ginsberg's a poet"** – and doesn't play rock and roll. Even back when the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were recycling blues and R&B as pop music, he had his doubts about the whole enterprise. **"Part of me fell for it, but part of me didn't. The best part of me didn't fall for it at all."** These days, he only listens to the old-timers, and he treasures the personal encounters he had. Big Joe Turner "on his last legs," walking with a cane, singing in one more club. Lonnie Johnson – **"when he walked into the room, there was an eeriness about him"** – showing him guitar fingerings. **"I remember all those old guys I saw. They live in my head. I can't get rid of them."**

If he's adamant these days about seeing himself as their descendant and not a modernist genius for whom they were samples in the mix, who can blame him? Fans imagine the man who wrote *It Ain't Me, Babe* and *Desolation Row* and *Gotta Serve Somebody* as a demigod – or a Martian. **"But I'm not the songs,"** he says. **"It's like somebody expecting Shakespeare to be Hamlet, or Goethe to be Faust. If you're not prepared for fame, there's really no way you can imagine what a crippling thing it can be."** The will that got him here in the first place has kept him practicing his art—which he insists is simply a "craft" or a "trade" – but he's often about this close from giving it up. **"Some days I get up and it just makes me sick that I'm doing what I'm doing. Because basically – I mean, you're one cut above a pimp. That's what everybody who's a performer is. I have this voice in my head saying, 'Just be done with it'."**

But what else would he do? **"Oh, man!"** he cries, and twists around in his chair to look out the window. There's a beach out there. Blue sky. **"What wouldn't I do?"**

Ten years ago, Dylan says, **"I'd kind of reached the end of the line. Whatever I'd started out to do, it wasn't that. I was going to pack it in."** Onstage, he couldn't do his old songs. **"You know, like how do I sing this? It just sounds funny."** He goes into an all-too-convincing imitation of panic: **"I can't remember what it means, does it mean – is it just a bunch of words? Maybe it's like what all these people say, just a bunch of surrealistic nonsense."** When the Grateful Dead took him on tour in 1987, Jerry Garcia urged him to try again. **"He'd say, 'Come on, man, you know, this is the way it goes, let's play it, it goes like this.' And I'd say, 'Man, he's right, you know? How's he gettin' there and I can't get there? And I had to go through lot of red tape in my mind to get back there."**

Then, in October 1987, playing Locarno, Switzerland, with Tom Petty's band and the female singers he now says he used to hide behind, Dylan had his breakthrough. It was an outdoor show – he remembers the fog and the wind – and as he stepped to the mike, a line came into his head. **"It's almost like I heard it as a voice. It wasn't like it was even me thinking it. I'm determined to stand whether God will deliver me or not. And all of a sudden everything just exploded. It exploded every which way. And I noticed that all the people out there – I was used to them looking at the girl singers, they were good-looking girls, you know? And like I say, I had them up there so I wouldn't feel so bad. But when that happened, nobody was looking at the girls anymore. They were looking at the main mike. After that is when I sort of knew: I've got to go out and play these songs. That's just what I must do."** He's been at it ever since.

On the beastly hot Labor Day weekend of 1997, he ends his post hospital tour with an outdoor show in Kansas City, Mo. It's the usual crowd: '60s geezers, and kids with backwards caps, halter tops or granny dresses, nose studs, faux tattoos, T-shirts advertising a range of loyalties from Beck to Phish. What he sees from up here onstage is a floodlit ocean of faces and bare, swaying arms; he can smell the incense sticks someone in his crew sets burning in buckets of

sand. He starts with *Absolutely Sweet Marie* and moves on to a slinky *It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry*, to the Stanley Brothers' *Stone Walls and Steel Bars*, to a stately *Like a Rolling Stone*, in which his electric guitar tangles up with counter melodies from guitarist Larry Campbell and pedal-steel player Bucky Baxter in a sweetly chiming, wildly raving choir. When he comes off after the last encore, you congratulate him and touch his shoulder. His jacket's soaked.

He knows what they say about his concerts. 'Oh, he's massacring the songs, there's no way of knowing what you're going to get when you go see a Dylan show, blah blah blah.' It's true, to a certain extent. But OK, so that show wasn't any good. Doesn't matter. There's tomorrow. In fact, he's been reworking his songs in concert since he began touring with the Band in 1966, he calls the familiar recorded versions merely "blueprints." He'll distil a verse of *Mr. Tambourine Man* to just two or three notes, followed up by a couple of choruses on guitar, repeating a single three-note pattern over each of the changing chords. When he's on, there's no place you'd rather be.

True, he's muffed his share of big moments, like his 1985 appearance at Live Aid with Keith Richards, Ron Wood and at least one horribly out-of-tune guitar. He's too self-contained, too inward, to come across on TV or video. But now that every twerp with a stylist wants to be an icon, it's enormously appealing that Dylan doesn't have an act together. Fans affectionately post his curious onstage obiter dicta on the Internet: **"On bass guitar tonight, Tony Garnier. I'm not gonna say nothin' about Tony except that he once tried to milk a cow with a monkey-wrench."** If there's a hint of condescension here – jeez, what a character – it surely beats being Poet of His Generation. **"I don't like to think of myself in the highfalutin area,"** says Dylan. **"I'm in the burlesque area."**

Huh? Burlesque? Oh. Old timey lowlife entertainment. Standing naked in front of strangers. He's not a poet? Fine. But that's a hell of a word.

The old songsters Dylan reveres are gone now, but their music lives. He can never again be the sweet-faced young man on the cover of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963), walking on a snowy Manhattan street with a sweet-faced girl clinging to his arm. But he's still the man who said, in the notes to that album, **"I don't carry myself yet the way that Big Joe Williams, Woody Guthrie, Lead belly and Lightnin' Hopkins have carried themselves. I hope to be able to someday."** Not long ago, he saw a dance performance, to songs he'd cut in the early '60s, and didn't recognize his own voice. **"I said, 'What's this? This is incredible.' I thought it was some obscure person. But it wasn't; it was me. I'll have somebody get a copy and send it to you. You'll be amazed."** Not at how terrific he was; that's not what he means. He means, *That kid was on to something*. He means, *A lot of water's gone over the dam*.

"We try and we try and we try to be who we were," he says. **"That's why everybody who went down went down."** Is he talking about the dead-rock-star pantheon he's refused to join? **"People we all know,"** he answers. **"Who just – went down. Into the ground. Or scattered in the air, wherever they are. Sooner or later you come to the realization that we're not who we were. So then what do we do?"** His whole career has been a series of temporary answers. The latest answer's on his new record: you keep putting one foot in front of the other. "*I'm walking,*" the first song begins, "*through streets that are dead*." It's one of the great Bob Dylan opening lines. How many roads must a man walk down? It's the darkest one yet. But the point is, he's walking.

4 October 1997
London Press Conference, Metropolitan Hotel, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1135-1147.

On the afternoon of October 4th 1997, the day before his concert at Wembley Arena, Dylan gave a press conference for a small and select band of journalists from main-land Europe (Denmark, Germany, Italy, France, Holland, Spain, Norway and Portugal, by all accounts). Like the *Times on Saturday* interview, this session took place in the Metropolitan Hotel. Individual accounts of the interview have appeared in *Der Spiegel* and *Afton Bladet* [translations of these in *ISIS 75*] as well as *Les Inrockuptibles* and *Zoo* magazine [translated in *Dignity* 13 & 14 respectively]. An English language version subsequently appeared in the February 1998 edition of *Mojo* and this is the version presented below. Ideally, I would have preferred to use a tape transcript but I've not had access to one.

Here's how Morten Steiniche describes the press conference in his *Zoo* article.

> **I am getting better now. I've been forced to relax for some time, but with every passing day I am getting better.**
>
> That's his first words. The rest will come in a moment. But first a little about him: There's no one gasping as the door opens and he enters the sitting room in the luxury suite in the Metropolitan Hotel where I, a German, an Italian, a French, Dutch, Spanish, Norwegian and a Portuguese journalist are sitting and waiting. He is slightly bent, is wearing a blue striped silk shirt, a white T-shirt, black trousers with a white belt and black shoes. He is unshaved. The Dutch journalist, who in the bar was entertaining us with his impressive indifferent encyclopaedia of anything in Dylan's life, had guessed that he would be wearing sunglasses. He is not. Instead he's looking mildly at us, saying hello as he offers each of us his hand. Dylan is 56, and considering his tough life, the strangest thing looking at him at close range, is that he doesn't look older than he is. He doesn't look younger either. Just different from what you are used to from pictures and from concerts. Close up you can see the lines on the face and the grey hairs that have started to pop up here and there in his tousled hair. But first and foremost he just looks quite ordinary. Such a man you probably wouldn't notice if you meet him on the street.
>
> The interview lasts about three quarters of an hour. In the first quarter of an hour he sits bent over and is nervously pressing together the palms of his hands, but then he starts to relax just a little. For a short moment he leans back in the sofa, but most of the time he's surrounded by that restlessness that has characterised most of his career and life.

The *Mojo* 'exclusive' is the longest and most exhaustive. It is described as "The Mojo Interview" and the introduction states that "...he tells Serge Kaganski". There is no mention of the fact that this is just another re-hash of the Press Conference as has already appeared in various incarnations. Despite this "con", the interview which appears in *Mojo* is the best of all those so far published. It leaves out nothing that is in the other interviews and adds further comment, although nothing really substantial (with the exception of the extracts below). It is almost identical to the article in *Les Inrockuptibles* but this is hardly surprising because the latter was also penned by Kaganski.

Anyway, here's what Kaganski had to write in Mojo 51.

AFTER A FEW MINUTES you forget you're with a legend. In those first moments of meeting, of course, you sponge in all the details: from the ground up, cowboy boots, classically tailored black pants, Western-style shirt, greyed hair, and on his once-more lean face all the wrinkles due a man of 56 recently hospitalised after a major heart scare. A very slight man even in his prime, he looks surprisingly strong. His handshake is soft, though not the boneless, dead fish non-grip of repute, and the famous pale-blue stare is undimmed in its intensity: when Bob Dylan fixes you full-beam you know exactly how it feels to be looked all the way through.

Yet, for all the professionally focused attentiveness, Dylan's chuckling affability and downhome insistence he's merely a minstrel plying an old-fashioned trade gradually relax the sense of occasion that both his cultural stature and the rarity value of an interview initially demand. He does not speak in riddles or tongues, nor otherwise does he block, shock, knock or lock one up (to misquote a phrase). To talk to Bob Dylan is not an honour but a pleasure.

SK: How close did you get to Elvis last time you were in the hospital?

BD: I'm getting better now, but I had a severe setback for a while. I seem to be getting better every day.

SK: Would you be admitted to the choir that Elvis has there?

BD: Oh, absolutely.

SK: Why did you choose Daniel Lanois to produce *Time Out Of Mind*?

BD: Well, we more or less chose each other. We worked together before on *Oh Mercy* and it worked out pretty well. We both have an understanding of what we wanted to do.

SK: What do you expect from a record producer?

BD: Somebody who can differentiate between what to play and what not to play. What type of song it is, and what the background of the song is. Someone to allow the song to come out in its entire form, rather than short-circuiting the song some place along the line, and then what happens is neither satisfying to me or the producer.

SK: Some people didn't care for the sound on your previous collaboration, *Oh Mercy*.

BD: Yeah, well Lanois has this sound in him. He doesn't do it all the time, but he has it in him to produce this, and I knew that.

SK: The record sounds more natural, more in the spirit of your live performances.

BD: That's right. Live performances are misreported. It seems like they lean on what my interpretation of my own song is. Sometimes to listen to the reviewers is like listening with an ear that's 20 years old or older. Having to grasp my kind of stage show in a competitive nature isn't really the correct way to do it because there's nothing to compare it to out there. The influences are completely different than whatever the popular music trends are.

SK: So what are those influences?

BD: Real simple – music from the '20s and '30s, and then maybe '50s. A very limited influence. Just American folk music and maybe rockabilly type music from the '50s, but no rock n' roll. I don't really feel like I've even been influenced by rock n' roll in terms of the Larry Williams-type rock n' roll or the pure rock n' roll form.

SK: Do you listen to the radio today?

BD: I do listen to it, but...

SK: When you listen to the radio today, do you get depressed?

BD: No, I do listen to the radio if I can find something to listen to, but personally, I listen to old-time radio shows. The shows that I actually listened to when I was growing up, they seem to be coming back. Like feeder groups, things like that.

SK: For example, you catch a tune by Jon Bon Jovi, would you recognise it?

BD: Not really, no.

SK: Not even contemporary artists like Bruce Springsteen?

BD: Well, Bruce is like a brother to me, so he's defined his music in my mind a little differently than a typical hard rock... I don't much listen to that.

SK: How about today's soul-type artists like Maxell?

BD: Not really. I think that the rap music is in a more pure form connected to blues than the performers who derive their music from Marvin Gaye or Stevie Wonder or somebody like that. You know, Stevie Wonder is still performing, so for that type of music, he's prominent.

SK: Is it true that Stevie taught you how to sing like yourself on *We Are The World*?

BD: Yeah, I'd forgotten and Stevie reminded me, that's right.

SK: On your album, the song *Highlands* seems very improvised. How well prepared are you when you go into the studio?

BD: Well, I think that long rambling talking thing... I think I've recorded things like that before, real early on. In that type of form, a person can say whatever they want because the form is simple. I wouldn't say it was improvised, but a lot of different thoughts were connected in a lot of different ways that might necessarily not be what they seem to be on the paper when they were written. This is like thoughts, you know, that could be connected over a two-month period of time.

SK: Do you have a feeling how a song should sound from beginning to end?

BD: Yeah, with that song it was pretty much what you hear. It was basically just a 12-bar song and could have gone this way or that way. It could have been a song that was sung or talked or whatever.

SK: Was it easier when you kept somebody like Sam Shepard as a collaborator?

BD: We'd find ourselves in a room with different people of different types with Sam. I wouldn't say it would be any easier, but it would be probably less... meaningless.

SK: How about more inspirational?

BD: Yeah, well, when you can find somebody to write songs with that's compatible, there's no question that you can do it quicker and probably more efficient than when you're left to your own self.

SK: How come an experience like this seems to be unrepeatable?

BD: I don't know. Sam does his thing. He's a playwright and I'm on the road, so we don't see each other all that much.

SK: You defined rock n' roll as something that's hard and smooth at the same time. What's the definition of the blues?

BD: It seems like such a simple structure, but it's an ideal form to say anything you want to say in its pure form. I don't know what the blues are. I don't know who has them and who doesn't have them, but I'm not sure people can even identify with them in today's rat-race world. To me, the blues are a more rural, agrarian type of thing. And even when they're taken to the big city, they still remain that way only pumped up with electricity. That's the thing: I mean, we're listening to all this music today, it's all electricity. Electric guitars, electric bass, electric synthesizers – it's all electronic. You don't really feel somebody breathing, you don't feel their heart in it. The further away you get into that, the less you're going to be connected to the blues. The blues to me is just a pure form, like old country music.

SK: How did you connect to the blues, out there in Minnesota?

BD: Well, America was tied in with the radio when I grew up. At that time, disc jockeys could play what they wanted to play. They don't do that any more, really.

SK: Were radio stations up there playing the blues?

BD: Radio stations were all over. It was a very large area and the transmitters could transmit thousands of miles. Look at Jimi Hendrix – he grew up in Seattle, but he got the same thing. The radio connected everybody like Orpheus or something. That's not so any more. I don't know when that disappeared, but now it's a homogenised sound everywhere you go. When I grew up, that was what you listened to.

SK: When you first tuned in – a revelation?

BD: Oh, yeah.

SK: Do you remember it?

BD: No, I don't really, because I don't really remember who was around at that time. There was a singer around named Johnnie Ray. He was popular and we knew he was different. He knew he was dynamic and different and really had heart and soul. He was an anomaly. He was stuck in there with Perry Como and Patti Page. I remember thinking he really could make you feel something. After that, I started listening to country music. I don't know how old I was, but there was Hank Williams and we used to get the Grand Ole Opry, too. What connected America was the radio. I can't stress the importance of that enough. In the '50s, especially.

SK: Did you develop your singing style after the radio of the '50s?

BD: Not really. I started listening to rural folk music after I left home or even before that. I think I developed my style through listening to Woody Guthrie. An intentional style.

SK: When did you decide that you would be a singer and a musician?

BD: I don't remember back that far. I don't remember ever doing anything else.

SK: On the new record, your voice sounds very strong.

BD: I always have had a problem making records because my idea of making records is to have the right song and deliver it the right way with the right instrumentation so that it moves me. Technology is not really my friend. It just takes it and trivialises my particular style of music. It squeezes it and shapes it into its own kind of form and would like me to sound like these groups that you mentioned because technology serves all these other kind of people. The technology is part of the group.

SK: But you had the help of a producer who knew technology, Daniel Lanois.

BD: Anyone can make a record that sounds this way, but making a record that sounds this way – that's not going to serve everybody either. It probably won't work for most people because I have a very limited range. I try to understand a song as well as I can before I perform it. I won't want to record a song that I don't feel is a part of me.

SK: Do you get bored easily in the studio?

BD: Yeah.

SK: Do you get bored in general playing the songs you played over 30 years ago?

BD: Well, for me the songs are alive. I don't get bored singing the songs because they have a truth to them. They have a life to them. And it changes from night to night, any old kind of way that I want to play them.

SK: It can pain people who just want to hear *Like A Rolling Stone* like they remember it on the record.

BD: I know, but like I said before, these songs on my early records, they're more like blueprints. I can't play them all because every one of these records has a different band on them. Every one of these records has a different instrumentation. I'd need a hundred people to play every song exactly like it was on the record.

SK: You're touring.

BD: Well, that's all I do. It's just natural to me.

SK: Can we expect a European tour later?

BD: I hope so. We've toured Europe a lot in the last 10 years. We were always here and there. I don't usually tour with a particular record. My records aren't souvenirs for a particular tour that's out there.

SK: How never-ending is never-ending?

BD: I don't know why people talk about never-ending, because I don't really consider myself on tour. We just go out and play a certain amount of shows every year, so it isn't really a tour. It could stop any time. Part of me doesn't want to do it at all. Part of me would just like to be done with it all.

SK: Do you think Woody would have done it this way if he had a chance to cross oceans?

BD: Well, he lived and performed at a much different time than this. There wasn't any massive occasion of Woody Guthrie music, don't forget.

SK: You're playing more and more lead guitar in a style mixing between Django Reinhardt and Link Wray.

BD: That's a good way of putting it.

SK: Is it because you want to explore the songs further?

BD: No. You can't even call my guitar playing guitar playing. Coming out of the folk school, it has a certain kind of momentum to the rhythm of it, but outside of that, my guitar playing just plays with the drums. In my group, the drummer is the lead guitar player. I play on the structure of where the drum plays, and that's all I do. It's almost like a horn. I don't want to be known as a lead guitar player and I wouldn't assume a position like that, but nobody's going to play that part that I want to hear being played. I've tried years and years to get somebody to play it, but nobody wants to stick to that particular style because it's too simple or something.

SK: Do you practice your guitar playing?

BD: I do practice, every chance I get. But then, we play every night, so that's practice, too.

SK: Of all the '60s stars, you're the one who tours most. What makes you still want to go up there? What gives you the energy?

BD: The songs do. I don't think there is anybody playing the type of songs that we're playing. That's all. The same way with The Rolling Stones, but aren't they touring now?

SK: They tour every six or seven years, but you're like a hobo.

BD: Yeah, you can look at it that way, but it isn't that way at all. It's more like a job, it's a craft, it's a trade.

SK: The hardest working man in show business?

BD: No, not yet

SK: These days there are three generations of people at your shows. Does that amaze you?

BD: I don't know, faces are all faces to me. Human beings are just a whole race of people. I can't tell who's who or how old anybody is. I would never even hazard a guess.

SK: Do you release new records to give new generations some songs of their own?

BD: Yeah, but like I said, to me it's a trade. I do this like you all are journalists. I do the same thing. You go night after night, day after day, onto the next story. Well, I do the same thing, I'm just onto the next town.

SK: Years ago you said that sometimes it feels only one better than being a pimp.

BD: Well, unfortunately there is a nature of that. Yeah, I do feel that way. Performing's all the same. When you're up on-stage and you're looking at a crowd and you see them looking back at you, you can't help but feel like you're in a burlesque show. I don't care who you are. Pavarotti might feel the same way, I don't know. I would think that part of him sincerely does.

SK: But you can still do it with soul even if there is a commercial side to the job.

BD: I don't know. I don't know about doing it with soul. Do it with whatever talent God gave you. I'm not sure if it's got anything to do with being soulful or not.

SK: Did your collaboration with The Grateful Dead change your approach to your career as a performer?

BD: Absolutely. That was a turning point for me, playing with the Dead.

SK: What did it teach you?

BD: Well, it taught me to look inside these songs I was singing that, actually at the time of that tour, I couldn't even sing. There were so many layers and so much water had gone round, that I had a hard time grasping the meaning of them, although the Dead didn't. They found great meaning in them and this really made me extremely curious as to why they could and I couldn't.

SK: How could you not understand your own songs?

BD: Well, on a level of musicianship and a level of concentration, a level of not so much verbally understanding literally what they're about but understanding the spirit of them...

SK: You mean the lyrics?

BD: The spirit of the songs is what had been getting further and further away from me. Probably because I had been playing these songs with a lot of different bands, and they might not have understood them so well, you know what I mean? And it influences you. I know it influenced me until I started playing with the Dead and I realised that they understood these songs better than I did at the time.

SK: Had you also forgotten who you were when you were young?

BD: I had forgotten about that long before that.

SK: The New York Times implied that you are sometimes envious of 17-year-olds who come to your shows.

BD: I don't know about that. Seventeen years old – I don't know how old anybody is. I've got grandkids. Youth is youth. Either you're there or you're not there.

SK: Is it a problem for you to connect with the youth?

BD: No, that's a different culture of people. Like I tell you, I've got grandkids and they have their own performers they follow. I perform for people who understand my sentiment.

SK: On the new album, there's a line, *"I wish someone would come and put back the clock for me..."*

BD: Don't we all feel that way! Is that something that's just peculiar to me! Does any body else feel that way! I know I do. I'd like to start my life over again.

SK: That's what you're doing with your whole career, always starting over again.

BD: I don't know, you start over again you might be another person... You know, learn another trade, marry a different girl, live in a different place.

SK: Throughout your career, you've reinvented yourself several times. And people like you for it.

BD: Well, that's human nature.

SK: Was that planned or did it just happen?

BD: Everything in life just happens.

SK: But sometimes you sit back and plan.

BD: No, things just happen.

SK: And not necessarily for a purpose?

BD: Yeah, there could be some great divine purpose. I'm sure there is. In fact, I'm pretty positive everything has a divine purpose.

SK: Do you ever feel like the songs that you write are already written and floating around in the universe and you pick them up with the right intent?

BD: Woody Guthrie said that. As for as I know, he is the originator of that thought. And in a certain sense, there's a great deal of veracity to that.

SK: Did he believe there was a divine hand involved in songwriting?

BD: I don't know. I know he was a prolific writer. There are papers that he's written that you can go see now in the library... many many, many songs that were never recorded, bits and pieces of songs that he had no tune or melody for, poetry.

SK: He once wrote around 30 songs in 10 days. That's more like craftsmanship and hard work.

BD: It seems to me that you can definitely call what he did craftsmanship and hard work. I don't think he sat around and pondered what he was writing about.

SK: Are you a fast writer?

BD: Lately, no. I'd say that this latest album, from its incarnation until the finished product, bits and pieces here and there... maybe two years.

SK: Were there more songs recorded which you now wish to release?

BD: There are other songs and they probably will find their way onto some other record.

SK: How do you make sure that new musicians understand your songs? Do you audition them?

BD: I don't really audition anybody. Usually people come to the band and we know who they are.

SK: How was playing before the Pope?

BD: Oh, great show.

SK: You played *Forever Young*.

BD: I think so.

SK: Today you shake hands with the Pope, yet 25 years ago you were the leader of a counterculture...

BD: Maybe a different Pope.

SK: Do you think the human mind can understand the past and future, or are they both illusions that can be manipulated?

BD: That's a deep, unfathomable question. In a certain sense, everything probably still exists from the days of Dante back to the days of Moses. It's alive, it's just living in an invisible world – to us. We only perceive what we see, but we can't see into an invisible world. And in that world everything that ever was, I wouldn't be surprised if it still exists. People are the same, aren't they? We just live in a different time, a different culture. Feelings don't really change.

SK: On your new album, the lyrics are very plain spoken, a long way from your poetic style of the'60s. Why do you change your style?

BD: My lyric style from those years, that changed a while ago, I think.

SK: The new album's very melancholy.

BD: Well, there's a great disparity between the album and me.

SK: Many listeners have marvelled that the album is so sombre of tone.

BD: I don't think it's somber of tone at all. Look in the newspaper – what's happening in Bosnia is somber of tone. Or South America or the Middle East or something, if you want to see somber tones.

SK: You talk about lost love.

BD: Well, I sang about lost love on my first album. I think this relates more to my first album than the last album.

SK: Do you here any personal favourites on the new album?

BD: No.

SK: What did you think of Billy Joel bashing out *Make You Feel My Love*?

BD: Billy Joel's a very dynamic artist and he can hear things in a song because he's also a songwriter. He managed to probably convey that song in a different way than me. Nevertheless, he got something out of that song I would have never dreamed of myself. That's what happens when you write a song, somebody can definitely interpret it a different way than the person who wrote it.

SK: How did he come to record it?

BD: Well, all these songs were given to my record company before this particular album was released so they could see what I was recording and decide whether they wanted to release it or not, because we were recording a lot of stuff. At a certain point we stopped recording and said, "Let's give this to the record company and see if they even want to release a record like this." I wasn't sure what was going to be on this record and what was not going to be on this record. Billy had heard this song, and at that time I wasn't really positive one way or another whether it was going to be included, so might as well let Billy do it.

SK: Did he hear a demo?

BD: I don't think there were any demos on these songs. We went in and recorded them exactly the way you're hearing them.

SK: When you write a line like, "*My sense of humanity is going down the drain,*" does it express what you feel about the world today?

BD: It's just like Elvis Presley singing, "*You ain't nothin' but a hound dog*." Are you going to ask Elvis Presley, "is that the way you feel about somebody!" You change from one minute to the next. The lesson here is to capture what you're feeling at a certain moment. That's what we all have to do. We might change after an hour or a day. But

that's the important thing. So whatever's being said on this collection of songs, it's all true.

SK: Does it annoy you that people read into your lyrics so much that isn't there?

BD: No. It wouldn't be as annoying to me as it probably would be for someone else who actually has to take the time and trouble to actually go through it and decide what it is they think the singer is feeling or saying. I seem to be the only one who has this type of particular attitude. I don't think you have these attitudes on some of these other singers you were just mentioning.

SK: You always resist this idea of being an icon of the '60s or a spokesman for whatever generation. It's always meant to be a very big compliment.

BD: I don't consider it a compliment. I think that's just another word for washed-up has-been.

SK: It's better to be a has-been than a never-was.

BD: Well, that's debatable.

SK: Is it a burden sometimes to be Bob Dylan?

BD: Well, it would be easier for me to be me than it would be for me to be you. I don't know how I would deal with being somebody else, that would be more of a hardship than being me. I think that's true for anybody.

SK: You've said that fame can be very crippling.

BD: It can be. It doesn't have to be, but at certain times fame is something you'd like to forget about. At certain times, all of us who are famous just want to be left alone.

SK: John Bauldie, who put together the magazine about you, *The Telegraph*, died in 1996. Do you think it's right to continue?

BD: (Pause) **I don't know. I'm not involved. It's not like they're fan magazines. I don't really have any input into any of these magazines they put out. I've seen a few of them. They usually interview people who know me or think they know me or barely know me, but what can you do? It's like reading about somebody else that never existed.**

SK: There's a photograph of you playing in the Lone Star Café with Levon Helm, Rick Danko and a harmonica player where you seem to be having great fun. It that the intimate sort of setting where you'd ideally like to work!

BD: Oh, that's where I started out, yeah. Small clubs. I don't remember playing that particular club. I remember playing with The Band.

SK: Are you connected with what's happening in world affairs and how it bears upon music?

BD: No, I can't say that I am.

SK: Back in the '60s you were.

BD: Maybe, but I don't feel it revolved around anything but my working performance as a musician and a singer. Everything in my world revolves around the particular type of music that I love.

SK: Do you think the popular song is no longer a means to carry messages about the state of the world?

BD: No. I think we read newspapers for that function or watch TV.

SK: That's very passive.

BD: That's the nature of the world, to be passive. We go to football games and somebody else is playing football, we go to see soccer games – and we're not playing.

SK: Back in the '60s, though, people could play politics and change things.

BD: Well, maybe, but I don't know of any music that has. I know of a time when they say it has, but it wasn't in the 1960s. In America.

SK: Did you ever think you could change politics with music?

BD: No. If I wanted to do that I guess I would have gone to school or Harvard or Yale and tried to be a politician or something.

SK: Why write a song like *Masters Of War*, then?

BD: Er... that's up to me... er, that's a very non-political song. I don't know what politics is, to tell you the truth. I don't know the difference of right-wing or left-wing. I don't know

those differences. I can be whatever they call conservative, I can be completely on the right on something which somebody else thinks is right; and I can be completely on the left on something. I go back and forth. I can hold the same view on the same thing from two or three different angles.

SK: Crosby, Stills and Nash are convinced they helped end the war in Vietnam.

BD: They did! I think they did (laughs)**. They were those kinda performers.**

SK: Do you still see your peers from the '60s like Crosby, Stills And Nash, The Beatles or The Rolling Stones?

BD: Yeah. Occasionally. Everyone who's still around, yeah.

SK: Do you look back to the '60s?

BD: No, and I don't really know anybody who does that. I know performers who started out with me – Rolling Stones, Crosby, Stills And Nash, whatever – we don't ever talk about the '60s. Or the '70s. I think it's more important for other people who were around then. But do young people talk about things that happened over 30 years ago?

SK: They do.

BD: They do?

SK: They are fascinated by the '60s because it was a time when people could change something, unlike now when people sit back thinking they can't.

BD: I think it was the idea that you could change something back then that was more important than actually doing it. You felt like something was happening. That idea is missing now. Ideas are very strong. Ideas can't be killed.

SK: You were nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature.

BD: Yeah. It was too bad I didn't get it, haha. I wished I did. I don't know what it even is. I know it's a high, elevated honor. Nobel – isn't he the man who invented dynamite?

SK: Yes.

BD: OK... The Nobel Peace Prize!

SK: What, for you, is the distinction between a poet and a songwriter!

BD: Ooooh, man (chuckles)**. Well, songs can have an element of poetry in them. But a poem doesn't have to be defined, whereas a song must be defined. It must have a clear definition. I think a song is much more limiting than a poem. A poem is something open-ended and unlimited in scope. A song can't do that, just by the nature of a song. One important thing about 30 years ago, it was at the tail-end of the folk music scare, or whatever we call it, and it might have been more connected to poems because the advent of television was not so prominent, so people still did news kind of things in a song. Woody Guthrie was an exponent of that, talking about things that happened here, and then he could sing it over there before newspapers and TV got a hold of it. So people gathered information about songs, and if you could look into American folklore you can see that this is true all the way along the line. Everything momentous that happened in history was defined in a song. That's not so any more. People seem to know things and hear about things instantaneously, and a song doesn't have the same relevance. I think poems are the same kind of way. Great poetry can still be written from a particular point of view and still has relevance on top of the news, but a song can't do that any more.**

SK: So you think that television and mass communication has destroyed the essence of popular songs?

BD: These type of songs, yeah. I know for a fact that if you go listen to the early part of the century and find 20 songs about the sinking of the Titanic, each one of them gives you a different point of view and each one of them is heartfelt. That's a popular event, the sinking of the Titanic. The murder of James A. Garfield, same way. A coal-mining disaster, same way. You can find songs written about all these subjects, from different angles.

SK: Do you cherish your reputation as the man who brought poetry to rock n' roll?

BD: I don't think about that one way or the other. I think that if I didn't do it, someone else probably would have. What I brought was the knowledge of that simplified music, which at the time I was starting out was not currently popular. People didn't know who Leadbelly was. They never heard Leadbelly, they didn't hear Blind Willie McTell, they never heard Woody Guthrie. Pop music is the same way today as it was when I was coming up: if someone is a serious musician, they don't listen to it, any more than we didn't listen to it when we were growing up; we just knew there was something in it that was false, and we could just leave it alone. That's why we listened to people like Leadbelly, because we knew they were telling the truth. And some way today, if you're a serious musician. I was a musician for years – I don't listen to it like a regular person would buy a record. To me, it's not entertainment.

SK: When did you first hear Harry Smith's folk anthology?

BD: I heard that particular record early on when it was very difficult to find these kind of songs. It was like today, if you go into a record store and you're a young musician and you're starting out and you know music is going to be your trade for the rest of your life, what do you look for? Well, at that time they didn't sell that record. It wasn't in the music stores. I imagine I heard it over at somebody's house, some older kind of person who had this record. That entire record company went over to the Smithsonian Institute, and the man who started that company, he didn't, I guess, sell a lot of records in the music stores, he sold them to libraries. That's where the wealth of folk music was, on that particular record. For me, on hearing it, was all these songs to learn. It was the language, the poetic language – it's all poetry, every single one of those songs, without a doubt, and the language is different than current popular language, and that's what attracted me to it in the first place.

SK: Could it have the same impact 45 years later?

BD: More so, even. Because if you can sing those songs, if you understand those songs and can perform them well, then there's nowhere you can't go. You have to start at the bottom, whatever your trade is. If you can find the bottom.

SK: A murder ballad by Dock Boggs is pretty close.

BD: Yeah, it doesn't get much more at the bottom than that.

SK: You once said you loved Charles Aznavour.

BD: I do. Very much so. I became aware of him in 1962. I actually saw him perform in New York because I'd seen a movie he was in called *Shoot The Piano Player*. I saw that movie a bunch of times because the snow part of it reminded me of back where I come from.

SK: It was Francois Truffaut's least successful movie, I think

BD: Well, everything about that movie I identified with. Everything. So, Charles Aznavour came to New York to play – and I was the first one in line for a ticket!

SK: The Wallflowers – like them?

BD: Absolutely. They're playing in a different time from me, and people ask me about that, but this is the time they' re playing in.

SK: Are you concerned about your son's career in music?

BD: Yeah. My initial thought was that I just didn't want to see him get roughed up. There's a lot of performers who've got parents who are in the same trade. We all know who they are.

SK: If reviews are really good, does that affect you any more?

BD: I've seen a few of them, but I don't really follow the reviews. I like to see them, but... I don't know. I've got so many records out anyway. I hope they're perceived well, and if they are, then it makes you feel it's all been worth it.

SK: Your song *The Times They Are A-Changin'* was used in a commercial for a Canadian bank: a problem?

BD: Not for me, haha. None of that is a problem for me. My problems aren't in that particular type of area.

SK: Where, then?

BD: They're on the other side of that... somewhere... but I don't have any problem with that kind of thing.

SK: Is it true you have a golf handicap of 17?

BD: Excuse me?

SK: Are you a golf player?

BD: Golf player? I've swung a club a few times, though I wouldn't know if I was a golf player. I swing it sideways.

SK: Would 17 be accurate?

BD: Pretty close.

SK: Do you still paint?

BD: I try. It's a very demanding thing to do, painting. Very intense, because I paint from real life, so it's very difficult, the preparation to paint.

SK: Why did you decide to call your record label Egyptian Records?

BD: As compared to what? I don't know. It just popped into my head at the time.

SK: What is the label's next project?

BD: We're going to do a Carter Family record, along the same lines as the Jimmie Rodgers record.

SK: What does Jimmie Rodgers mean to you?

BD: I personally identify with Jimmie Rodgers a great deal. Jimmie Rodgers was probably the singer even Woody Guthrie listened to. His voice, to me and probably a great deal of other singers, was a great identifiable voice that rose above the culture of the times.

SK: Everyone can sing a song by him without knowing it's his. Would you like to be remembered in the same way?

BD: I would be, but I don't think it's possible, because people identify me with the songs I write. They don't identify me on what I can do with a song that's already been written. I feel that that's just an area that I've never really been able to expound upon because I don't record that much. People expect me to record songs of mine that I've written. So that's my particular dilemma.

SK: You did two albums of songs written by others (*Good As I Been To You* and *World Gone Wrong*).

BD: Those were folk albums. And those songs were all public domain songs, they were not necessarily written songs – nobody knows who wrote them, if anybody did write them. Those particular songs evolved and are classified as folk music.

SK: So you can record songs you have not written.

BD: Yeah, but that's something that I did when I first started out, so I didn't feel I was covering anything new. I was just reminding people that these are the songs where my songs are derived from. In case they forgot.

SK: Did making these albums influence the writing of these new songs?

BD: In a sense, yeah. In a way they did. But I'm not sure what kind of importance... you know...

SK: Did those two albums help buy time to start writing again?

BD: Yeah, in a certain sense that's true also, because I didn't have anything. I had bits and pieces of songs at that particular time, but also I was concerned with how simple it was to make an album just with myself and nobody else. It was a challenge that I felt it was necessary for me to confront.

SK: It must have been liberating.

BD: It is. Very much so.

SK: Tempted to do it again!

BD: Yes. I would like to do that again. I would like to do that again with the sound we now know it's possible to get. We didn't have the sound down on... What we tried to do with this latest record is make a CD or whatever it is now in contemporary terms – which sounds like an old record you put on a record-player. Not necessarily an old record

that's reprocessed and made into a CD, because, let's face it, all the stuff from the '20s and '30s and '40s and '50s has been reprocessed so it can fit onto a CD, and you don't get the impact that it had when you first heard it when we had to play it over a record player with a needle on a piece of plastic or whatever it is, and it had impact. Records today don't have impact, and that's a question of the sound of technology. I mean, how many bands have you heard where chainsaw guitars and sounds coming out of a drummer that's playing with 10 different drums and cymbals and you think it must be, like, so loud you can't contain that sound! And then when you hear it on CD it sounds all fuzzy, and it's not a true replica of what anybody sounds like. You go into any bar and hear a blues band and you'll be in some kind of way moved, but then you'll hear it on CD and wonder what you heard in the first place.

SK: So you don't listen to your old records on CD?

BD: I don't listen to my old records at all. Not at all.

SK: Why not?

BD: I don't really want to be influenced by myself. Or reminded by myself. Basically I don't want to be influenced by myself.

SK: You just want to move on?

BD: Yes. Onward. Onward forever.

SK: But you go back to the old music.

BD: Always. I don't think there's anything better than that.

SK: So the times they are a-changin'...

BD: But they're changing back!

I Feel Like Talkin' To Somebody

As published in ISIS *#75, pp. 56-58*

While in London for his recent UK concerts Bob Dylan agreed to meet with European media. Unlike the three recent US interviews that were conducted on a one-to-one basis, the London episode took the form of a small informal press conference.

The meeting was staged on Saturday October 4, at 3.00pm at the Metropole Hotel, London. The five journalists invited to attend were from Sweden, Norway, France, Germany and Italy, no-one from the UK press was present. The invitees sat around a table – at what has been dubbed a "round sofa" session – asking Dylan questions in turn. The duration of this questions & answers session was approximately 80 minutes.

At the time of going to print only two of the five interviews has been published, one each in Sweden and Germany. It should also be noted that these interviews have been translated from tapes of the original English conversation to either Swedish or German and then back into English. And although I have managed to obtain translations from two independent sources and have cross-checked them, it is almost certain that mistakes in translation will have occurred. We are currently trying to obtain an original tape from journalists present so that a full and accurate transcript can be published in a future ISIS. Interview one is from *'Der Spiegel'*.

Q: Mr. Dylan, you nearly died this spring of an inflamed heart. How do you feel today?

BD: I'm getting better, gradually, hut for a long time I was forced to think some pretty serious thoughts.

Q: Did you think that Elvis had enlisted you in his heavenly choir?

BD: Absolutely!

Q: Your new album "*Time Out Of Mind*" is considered to be your best in more than twenty years. But it sounds bitter, dark and very lonely...

BD: I disagree. What's happening in Bosnia or in South America, that's dark and bitter.

Q: On "*TOOM*" you sing: '*Walking through streets that are dead*' and '*there is less and less to say*'; you complain '*My sense of humanity is going down the drain*;' and you don't even care much for the women. While you don't care much for love you sing you have to live in '*the same old cage*'.

BD: I dealt with unhappy relationships on my first album. People shouldn't take everything so literally. Elvis Presley once sang: '*You ain't nothing but a hound dog*'. It would have been really stupid to ask Elvis if he meant that seriously. People change from one minute to the next. A record catches the atmosphere of that moment. An hour later, everything is different. Whatever anyone says about this collection of songs – it somehow turned out right.

Q: Your line to '*Don't follow leaders, watch the parking meters*' was back then in the sixties a super trick because after that you were worshipped even more by a lot of your fans. You're considered to be an incorruptible artist who hates commerce, whose work is authentic and truthful.

BD: I sure would like to be spared the burden to muse about what my fans think about me or my songs. It's true, that I do seem to be one of the few artists who attract those kind of people.

Q: Since the middle of the sixties it seems that you have had enough of being the icon of the counterculture or even their mouth-piece.

BD: I don't take those titles as a compliment. Words like 'icon' or 'legend' are just another way to describe someone who is yesterday's news and who no-one wants to hear anymore.

Q: Is it getting to you to be Bob Dylan?

BD: It's easier to be me than someone else. But just like most famous people, I just want to be left alone.

Q: Are you still interested in politics?

BD: No. All I care about is my performance as a musician and a singer. Everything in my life revolves around the music that I love.

Q: Is it still possible nowadays to influence the world by songs? To be political by means of messages?

BD: No, that's what newspapers are for. If people want to have the world explained to them they should watch TV.

Q: That's a very passive approach.

BD: That's what we've come to. People go to the football stadium, but they don't play themselves anymore.

Q: Did you ever think you could be politically active through your songs?

BD: No, no, no. If that's what I had wanted to do, I would have gone to Harvard or Yale, and studied to become a politician.

Q: Your fellow performers Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young are convinced that they stopped the Vietnam war.

BD: I believe it. That's the kind of guys they were.

Q: How was it for you to be playing for the Pope in Bologna a few weeks ago?

BD: It was a wonderful show.

Q: Why?

BD: It just was.

Q: Isn't it strange that a great enemy of the establishment suddenly performs for the Pope?

BD: Why? he's not the same Pope as back then.

Q: So, in your view of the world there is still a past and a future?

BD: Sure, but people really haven't changed since Moses. Feelings don't change.

Q: Before the Pope you played your songs honestly and pure like on the record. Normally the audience should be aware that you might massacre your own songs. Are you bored to play your songs as close to the original as possible? Or do you want to punish your audience?

BD: The real problem is the critics. They come with ears that are still back in 1975 or even further back. But my songs have a life of their own, they have an inner truth and they change from night to night. That's why people don't recognise all of the songs. I have recorded my records at various points of my life, with various musicians using various instruments. If I was to play them all faithfully, I'd have to drag a hundred people up on the stage.

Q: At the end of the eighties you announced the so-called '*Never Ending Tour*' and up until now you have performed about 150 times a year. Isn't that becoming just a little bit too much?

BD: It's my job, my craft, my trade. Standing on stage is to me as natural as breathing. Besides, I am the only one to sing these kind of songs anymore. Popular music is in the same state as when I started singing. If somebody is a serious musician, nobody listens to him. In the old days we were strong enough to look for people who told the truth.

Q: Recently you said: '*Sometimes I feel just a little bit above a pimp*'.

BD: When you are up there and you look at the people and the people look back at you, like it or not, you have the feeling of being a Burlesque show. I am pretty sure Pavarotti gets the same feeling.

Q: Are the people in the audience in Vienna different from a crowd in San Francisco?

BD: When I'm up there, I just see faces. A face is a face, they are all the same.

Q: Do you envy the 17 year-olds in your audience for their youth?

BD: I'm a grandfather. I have grandchildren who like other singers. That's youth today. I play for people who understand my feelings.

Q: On your new record that sounds a bit darker. There you sing the line: '*I wish somebody would push back the clock for me*'.

BD: Doesn't everybody feel that way? I 'd love to start my life over again, to learn a new craft, marry other women, live in other places.

Q: Isn't that just what you did during your career? In the early sixties you were the folk singer of the movement for civil rights. A few years later you took the electric guitar and sang '*Like a Rolling Stone*', mocking the counterculture which had you for a hero. People yelled 'Judas' at you and you took to the countryside, got settled with a family and played country rock. In other words: during your career you always reinvented yourself and never stayed the way your fans wanted you to be.

BD: That's just human nature.

Q: But did you do that consciously or did it just happen?

BD: Everything in life just happens. That's the way life is; it happens.

Q: Without meaning or goal?

BD: I am sure that there's a great divine meaning behind it all.

Q: Where do your songs come from? Do they come to you just flying through the universe?

BD: The folksinger Woody Guthrie had that idea first and I think he's right.

Q: Which music is an influence to you these days?

BD: A simple music from the 20s & 30s and a little bit from the 50s. The influences are very limited: American folkmusic, Blues, a bit of Rockabilly. But no Rock n' Roll. I don't think Rock n' Roll ever was of any great importance to my work.

Q: Do you listen to the radio these days? Or are you annoyed by popmusic?

BD: I tune into old radio shows. Sometimes they play the theatre groups I grew up with. I think that's coming back.

Q: Would you recognise a contemporary popsong, for example a song by Bon Jovi?

BD: Not really, no.

Q: On your new record there is a song that lasts for over 16 minutes and is called '*Highlands*'. It sounds as if it was improvised. How well do you prepare yourself before you enter the studio?

BD: It's been a long time since I recorded a song like '*Highlands*'. I wouldn't say '*Highlands*' was really improvised, but a lot of thoughts in it came out differently during the recording than the way they were written on paper. Actually it's just a simple blues that can go in one direction or another.

Q: In these cases, don't you wish sometimes you could work again with writer and musician Sam Shepard, who helped you with writing songs in the eighties?

BD: Well, in the course of life you find yourself with different people in different rooms. Working with Sam was not necessarily easier, but it was certainly less meaningless. In every case writing a song is done faster when you got someone like Sam and are not on your own.

Q: It seems, though, that you and Sam would not be able to work it out these days.

BD: Sam does his thing, I do mine. He is a writer and I am on the road. It's not that we see each other a lot.

Q: What does the blues mean to you?

BD: The blues? An extremely simple and open form in which you can say anything: but it's become rare. I don't even know if people know what to do with it in this world which has become a rat race. The blues stems from the land, from the cotton fields in the South. And it was taken into the big cities and charged with electricity. Today it has become electronic. You don't feel anymore that someone is breathing there or that there is still a heart there. And the farther away it gets, the less connected it is to what I call the blues. As I said, the blues is simple and it comes from the land, just like country music.

Q: You are from The North, from Minnesota, how did you get in touch with the blues?

BD: When I was young, America was connected above all by means of the radio. The radio was most important. You had stations who could play whatever they wanted. And all of this was broadcast over thousands of miles. Take Jimmy Hendrix, he grew up in Seattle. The radio connected us all. I don't know when they started to play all that pop, I only know that radio today is different. Someone like the singer Johnny Ray, who was kind of a leper back then, he wouldn't stand a chance today. Johnny Ray had a whole different kind of dynamics, he had heart and soul and he really wanted us to feel something when he sang.

Q: When did you decide that you – the white, Jewish son of a hardware store owner in a northern state of the USA – that you could also play music that made people feel things?

BD: I can't remember back that far, I cant remember ever doing anything other than sing, for that matter. But if there was someone back who influenced, consciously or not, it was the folksinger Woody Guthrie.

Q: What did strike you especially in Woody Guthrie?

BD: He worked extremely hard and wrote very much and writing was easy for him. He probably didn't have time at all to think about a song very long: being a socialist he wanted to bring the news very quick to the people. In those times, whenever a mine collapsed, songs were written about it instantly. But since we have television people all over the world know what has happened in an instant.

Q: Do you listen to your old songs when your at home?

BD: I never listen to my old stuff. I don't want to be reminded of myself or be an influence on myself. From now on, I'll only listen to...

Q: ...the old music?

BD: There's nothing better.

Q: *The times they are a-changin'*...

BD: ...but way back.

Q: Last year you sold your protest song *The Times They Are A-Changin'* to the Bank of Montreal, who used it in a commercial. Do you regret this?
BD: Not at all. I don't have any problem with that. Absolutely none.

<u>Interview 2 by Jens Peterson. pub. 'Afton Bladet'</u>
Q: How do you feel today?
BD: I feel better now, but I came to a serious halt for awhile. It's gets better day by day. I was in constant pain. Unbearable pain. That's all I can say.
Q: You have been called icon and legend and spokesman for a generation. Are these compliments?
BD: No, I don't see it as a compliment. Legend – that's just another word for washed-out has-been.
Q: On the record you sing that you want to turn back the clock.
BD: Don't we all feel like that? Surely it isn't just me, is it... Don't you feel that? I'd love to start my life over again. Learn a new trade. Marry me another girl. Live in a deferent place.

He doesn't listen to current pop music – Instead he goes back to the blues, country and folk music that once started him singing –

BD: When I grew up the radio was important. It was a revelation for me to hear that music on the radio. Like Johnny Ray was different. He had a heart. Then it was Hank Williams. We listened to Grand Ole Opry from Nashville. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of the radio.

He doesn't want to go on stage and sing the songs like they sounded on the records –

BD: My concerts are based on my interpretations of my own songs. The critics are listening with ears that are twenty years old.
Q: You play more and more lead guitar. A cross between Django Reinhardt and Link Wray.
BD: Ha ha, that's a good way of describe it. My guitar playing even be called lead guitar. It fits with my rhythm. In my band the drummer is the lead guitarist. I play off of him, like a wind instrument almost. Nobody else wanted to play those notes. I tried for years to get someone to do it, but it's too simple. So now I do it myself.

BD: The songs are alive to me. I never get tired of them. I never get bored of singing, the interpretations changes from night to night.
Q: When will the Never Ending Tour end?
BD: People keep saying that that, but I don't think we are tour all of the time. I do a certain amount of concerts every year. But it's not a constant never-ending tour. A part of me doesn't wanna do it at all. Just want to quit right away. Playing is a job. My trade. Like you're journalists. You are heading for the next news item, I'm heading for the next town.
Q: Do you like the Wallflowers?
BD: Absolutely. They play in a different era than I do. But I wouldn't mind playing with them.
Q: Do you take part in your sons career?
BD: My only concern in the beginning was that he would get hurt in the music business. Lots of people do get hurt.

BD: I don't know what politics are. I don't understand the difference between right and left. I can be conservative in one question and then to the left in another.

Q: You have been nominated for the Nobel prize
BD: Yeah, too bad I didn't get it. Frankly, I'm not really sure what it is.
Q: The Nobel prize for literature.
BD: Yeah, I know it's considered an honor to get it – Nobel? Wasn't he the one that invented dynamite?
Q: Yes.
BD: OK.
Q: I read somewhere that your golf handicap is 17. Do you really play golf?
BD: Oh yeah, I swing a club now and then. [Dylan say laughing.] **I don't know if I would call myself a golfer. – He swings his fists in the air as if he had a baseball bat -17? Yeah, that's probably pretty accurate.**

We also learned from the article that Bob was in a fine relaxed mood. He laughed a lot and drank lots of espresso. He also said that he hoped to play Europe next year.

4 October 1997
Alan Jackson Interview, Metropolitan Hotel, London, England

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1149-1156.

During Bob's short tour of the UK in late September / early October 1997, he not only gave a mini press-conference, but also gave an exclusive interview to the British journalist Alan Jackson. The interview took place in a tenth-floor room of the Metropolitan Hotel on London's Old Park Lane. For a Dylan interview, the meeting was set up at relatively short notice – just three weeks. The interview was published in the magazine section of the *Times On Saturday*, dated November 15th 1997. It also appeared elsewhere – in the Australian Weekend Review supplement of December 27-28 1997 for example.

BOB DYLAN REVISITED

He's not political, couldn't care less about the Sixties, and has even taken up golf. In his first British interview of the decade, the voice of a generation tells Alan Jackson why he's stayed true to his real roots.

PERHAPS BECAUSE he is here among us so infrequently, our collective impressions of him are like snapshots, images formed at specific times and places, captured as if with a flashbulb and then frozen in time. In my own mind, three in particular hold sway.

There is the sweet-faced youth seen on the cover of 1960's *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, the one who was just about to capture the whole world's attention, his hands stuffed into jean pockets, body hunkered down into his jacket and braced against the cold, and hurrying through New York City snow with a laughing, long-haired, in-love girl on his arm.

Then there is the colossus of popular culture, the wiry-haired, hook-nosed, multi-million-dollar success story and media ubiquity, revered throughout the second half of the Sixties and into the early Seventies, mixing with the great and the good, and wryly assessing the world from behind dark glasses. He is secure in his genius, this early-to-middle-period Bob Dylan. Undisputed in it. And the iconic face that he presented to us back then is as representative of that part of the century, as much a retrospective summation of it as is Warhol's Marilyn or the two-colour poster of a bearded and eye-patched Che Guevara that once faced out from a million bedsit walls.

And then there is the latter-day picture, that of a grizzled and significantly older man, his legend undimmed his commercial standing diluted and (we fear it) his talent too. This is the Dylan who has released a series of indifferent albums to harsh reviews and similarly indifferent sales: who, and too many times, has made stumbling, bumbling concert appearances; who converted from the Judaism of his birth to born-again Christianity, then, more recently, back to no-one's-quite sure-what-and-he-won't-say. It is man we no longer really know or understand, and who (again, we fear it) looks increasingly to have lost the plot.

Each of these three snapshots is in my head when a door opens in a daylight-flooded tenth floor room at the Metropole (painfully fashionable, determinedly minimalist, this hotel on London's Old Park Lane seems an unlikely setting for our encounter) and in walks the 56-year-old reality. A slight, self-effacing man, he is dapper, even dandyish, in a horizontally striped, black-and-white silk shirt, black jeans, and shiny basketweave loafers. His face (he has only recently recovered from a life-threatening viral illness) is heavily lined, the skin putty-coloured, and

framed by hyacinthine curls only lightly flecked with grey. It is like being faced with a Holy Trinity: he is all three of my Polaroid images in one, and yet none of them -something more.

He is also (and I was not anticipating this) a charming man. Bright-eyed. Softly-spoken. Infinitely more approachable than I had dared to hope, and entirely more lucid than his latter-day reputation had led me to expect. The longer hair and sharp clothes apart, he could be any kindly, personable Jewish man of late-middle-age. Someone coming up to retirement, perhaps. Indeed, somebody's grandad. Anything but a rock god.

Wincing at the autumn sunshine meanwhile, Dylan smiles and shakes hands. As aides struggle with the electronic system that controls the window blinds in this expensive fishbowl, we perform a small dance of good manners in front of an L-shaped sofa, each of us encouraging the other to choose a seat and sit first. Acknowledging our mutual awkwardness and seeking to put me at my ease, he laughs, shoulders shaking softly just like Mutley from Wacky Races. **"Heh-heh-heh,"** he goes, settling me at a close right-angle to him. **"Nice of you to come by."**

As if I had just dropped in: three weeks' worth of protracted telephone conversations with publicists in New York and London have brought me here. Finally confirmed less than 24 hours earlier, this is Dylan's first and only meeting of the Nineties with a British journalist. It is happening because he is in a good mood, feels relaxed, and has been reassured (his American PR has fine-toothcombed my past interviews) that I can be trusted to view him as a working musician, not Mr Superstar. More than anything, he hates to be approached as that. **"I'm just a tradesman, plying my trade,"** he will tell me more than once.

In the week that we meet, Dylan has put out *Time Out of Mind*, his first complete album of new material since 1989 and one good enough to remind us all how great he once was. It has attracted reviews more positive than any he has seen in 20 years, not only from the broadsheets and the more middle-aged music titles but right across the board to the NME. And the next day it will debut in the Top 10 both here and in America.

"Really" he asks (although he must already have been advised of it by his label, Sony), when I mention the prediction of its first UK chart position. **"That would be a big surprise for me. I wouldn't know what to make of it if it happened. It's not like I've suddenly started making pop music... Maybe I'm doing something wrong."** And then he laughs again: **"Heh-heh-heh."**

It would be nice to claim that *Time Out Of Mind's* unexpected success is down to nothing more than the fact of it being a fine record: dark, richly textured, thought-provoking and atmospheric, it is one of the year's best and most consistent releases in any genre. But the music business doesn't often work like that: frequently, it takes hype, a mega promotional budget, masses of interviews, and appearances on all the right TV shows to assure even media-sexy young acts of similar recognition. But none of these factors can be said to have been working in Dylan's favour. So perhaps it's simply that he has finally come round to the fore again on the wide, wide wheel of fashion. Or that a proportion of the record-buying public is now sated with the lightweight and disposable.

Or, even, that his brush with mortality has tugged at our collective consciousness, reminding us to show we appreciate him while we still can. **"Has it been disabling creatively to have people say my best work is behind me?"** Dylan repeats my question, examining his hands. **"Not really, because for the most part I felt – feel -that way myself. I don't think there's anything among this particular set of songs to overshadow what I've done earlier."**

Could this have been why he chose to play just one track from it in Bournemouth earlier in the week, on the opening night of a short British tour?

"Well, this record's only just out and I didn't expect people to know the material yet," he says (in fact, the song *Love Sick* was greeted with the applause of excited recognition from its opening bars). **"It took me by surprise when they responded like they knew it. Again that's something new for me, 'cause we consistently play shows and I'm under the impression that people aren't paying a great deal of attention to any record that's been released. If I'd done that** [played something new] **here ten years ago, I'd've got, Well, why isn't he giving us the old stuff?"**

Dylan and his touring band habitually play between 100 and 150 shows a year, year in and year out, all around the world. This itinerary has somehow attracted a title, the Never-Ending Tour, but he can't understand why. After all, touring is what working musicians did long before just making videos or appearing on chat shows became a promotional option – and it is as a working musician that he defines himself, not a recording artist. **"And it's easier that way. When you go and play live, you just do the show and it's over and done with. Then you're gone, onto some place else. The strain is more physical than mental, and that's why I choose to do it. Writing can be harder."**

"I don't ever really feel like I'm on or off tour. I simply work a certain amount of days each year, which puts me in the category of someone just making their living by a trade. I don't make a record every three years, then go and tour so that audiences will buy it as a souvenir. I'm not that kind of artist and never wanted to be: I don't approach music so dispassionately. And consistent touring is less of a hardship. You don't have to keep assembling and rehearsing a new team; there's less upheaval and dislocation in your life. The Never-Ending Tour? I don't know where that came from. I didn't name it that. Crosby, Stills & Nash play the same sort of number of dates as I do and they're not on a never-ending tour. Lots of other people too."

Equally, he finds it meaningless to speculate about whether a more authentic music, his own included, is coming back into vogue again. **"I just plough my own furrow, regardless. The people I listened to – still listen to – were never fashionable, as far as I'm aware. Woody Guthrie. Was he ever fashionable? I don't think so. Or Leadbelly? Or the great Robert Johnson? How many records did he sell in his lifetime? Very few. Whereas Al Jolson, he was fashionable... And what happens? In every era, fashionable people go out of fashion as soon as the prevailing wind changes."**

If we accept that, by dint of his annual touring schedule, he is a tradesman, we must insist on according Dylan the status of master craftsman as a composer and lyricist. His canon of work is almost certainly the best and most significant to have been amassed in the second half of this century by any one non-collaborative songwriter. He himself acknowledges only that it is out of respect for his own back-catalogue that he so assiduously avoids what, in her song *Free Man In Paris*, his nearest rival Joni Mitchell termed "the star-maker machinery behind the popular song." Turning his head so that, for once, he is looking directly at me, he says: **"I cannot do anything that would be demeaning to my songs."**

"If I wasn't working live and had no other avenue of expression, maybe there would be some kind of sense to it [the courting of a wider popularity]. **But I have no great need to appeal to people who are still in high school. I wouldn't want to seem as if I were going fishing for a younger set. A certain crowd of people come and see me play, and I'm assuming that they're the ones who naturally relate to what I sing about. And that they're there seems to be enough for me."**

Although I believe him, I wonder also if that part of his heart which might hope and look forward to still being loved and admired by the whole listening world hasn't just closed itself down, out of self-protection perhaps.

I wonder this particularly when he says that yes, to have critical praise and commercial success again is gratifying, but, **"I'm not used to it any more and, having gravitated instead towards bringing my work alive again night after night on stage, I find that to be what's important to me now. I can't say that it's never been my turn commercially, and that I've never known the feeling of having a record top the charts, because it wouldn't be true. But to have it again? I'm not really counting on it, 'cause I don't want to set myself up for a disappointment. I'm used now to just a certain amount of people buying my albums and then them falling out of sight. And I'm aware that the record market belongs to much younger people these days. As it should, as it should."**

The most casual listener's definition of him would probably be as angry and anti-establishment Greenwich Village troubadour, the young Bob Dylan of *Blowin' in the Wind*, *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* and *The Times They Are a-Changin'*. He himself rejects being so easily stereotyped, insisting: **"The reason I can stay so single-minded about my music is because it affected me at an early age in a very, very powerful way and it's all that affected me. It's all that ever remained true for me. Everything else changed."**

"And I'm very glad that this particular music [the tradition of folk, or blues] **reached me when it did because, frankly, if it hadn't, I don't know what would have become of me. I come from a very isolated part of North America** [Northern Minnesota] **and grew up in a very innocent time and I'm not affected by the Sixties. I don't care one bit about the Sixties. I don't think I'm standing on that foundation. I know it was a time of great upheaval in the world, but still I don't care about them. What's dear to me are the Fifties, 'cause that's when I grew up. I didn't grow up in the Sixties, so Bob Dylan the Sixties protest singer isn't me at all."**

Unprompted, he will begin to describe the small towns of, first, Duluth and then Hibbing in which he and brother David spent their boyhood. Dylan wants it to be understood that his musical personality had been forged long before the Sixties ever dawned. Already, he defined himself as a torch-bearer for the socially aware folk music pioneered by Guthrie and developed by other politically motivated performers in the Thirties, Forties and Fifties. To suggest he merely absorbed the Zeitgeist of young liberal America in the Sixties and thus assumed a convenient identity is, at best, to miss the point.

And perhaps it is because he has returned to his roots on it that *Time Out of Mind* is so good, and so successful: **"When I survey the horizon, I don't see anyone who has the same influences as me and who has stuck to them,"** he says. **"Realistically, my influences have not changed – and any time they have done, the music goes off to a wrong place. That's why I recorded two LPs of old songs** [his only other studio releases of the Nineties]**, so I could personally get back to the music that's true for me..."** Robert and David were the only children of father Abe (who left a job with Standard Oil to join the furniture and electrical goods business run by two of his brothers) and wife Beatty, both first-generation Americans whose parents had emigrated from eastern Europe. **"Knife sharpeners would come down the street, and the coal man too, and every once in a while a wagon would come through town with a gorilla in a cage or, I remember, a mummy under glass,"** Dylan says. **"People sold food off of carts, and it was a very itinerant place – no interstate highways yet, just country roads everywhere. There was an innocence about it all, and I don't recall anything bad ever happening. That was the Fifties, the last period of time I remember as being idyllic."**

This experience of a soon-to-vanish America can only have reinforced the relevance Guthrie's songs had for him and, by the time he arrived in Manhattan in 1961, the now-fledgling performer was a passionate exponent of the master's work, with a repertoire of some 100 of his songs from which to draw when launching his own performing career on the coffee-house circuit. Guthrie, almost 50, had long since fallen victim to Huntington's Chorea, a hereditary and degenerative disease of the nervous system, and was being held in an institution for the mentally ill in New Jersey. His young admirer began to make pilgrimages to visit him there.

"It was towards his last days [Guthrie died in 1967]**. I used to go across by bus and I found it a sad thing, because he wasn't mentally ill in any way he was the sanest person there, the only thing being that he had no control over his muscles. But I guess they couldn't think of anywhere else to put him, and it was a very frightening place. He did appreciate me playing his songs for him though. I know he did, 'cause he kept asking me to do more. It was difficult to communicate with him in any way, but I wasn't really looking for that. I had nothing to tell him. I just wanted him to know that I was playing his stuff, and to get some kind of affirmation that I was doing it correctly. And he gave me that affirmation. It was all very overwhelming."**

Although Dylan has suffered health scares of his own over the years (a serious motorcycle accident in 1966, for example, and the various addictions, attendant to a high profile music career in that decade), his most arresting experience of illness came earlier this year when he was stricken with severe chest pains. An initial medical examination declared him fit, but the continuous and intolerable pain did not abate. Hospitalised shortly afterwards, he was found to have pericarditis, a swelling of the sac around the heart caused by a rare fungal infection. **"I could never have envisaged myself being laid so low,"** he says now. **"It was very scary, and the pain incredibly intense. But I didn't have to have surgery and it has all been contained by medication. For six weeks, though, I was off my feet, without even the energy to get out of bed. Finally I healed up enough to get back out there to work. But though the medication has got to he scaled down eventually, for the time being I'm still on it."**

The experience has strengthened what he says has been a long-term ambition to build and endow a hospital: **"I've been thinking about it for some time, but now more than ever I see it as a worthwhile endeavor for me to put my time and energy into."** But it brought no sudden spiritual or philosophical revelations: **"I was too busy concentrating on just keeping breathing."** And we shouldn't look upon it as having informed the rather battered, bruised, lovelorn and world-weary lyrics of *Time Out Of Mind*: **"No, the tracks had already been written and recorded"** he says with a smile. **"We actually had twice as many songs as we needed and had to lose some. Those you hear on the album just naturally hung together, because they share a certain scepticism. They're more concerned with the dread realities of life than the bright and rosy idealism popular today."**

Ah yes, idealism. Dylan was one of the artists invited to perform at the inaugural concert marking President Clinton's first term of office. Is he still in contact with that administration, and does he feel cheered by its achievements? **"No, and no, not really,"** is the shrugged response. **"Politics and social trends, don't really concern me. Left, right or middle – it's all just the same to me. I'm not sufficiently schooled in politics to have a real view, just as I'm not schooled in medicine or science. And I try to be oblivious to culture, because I'm a singer and musician and I'd rather stay true to that. I haven't been to the finishing schools of the world, and I don't know the things that they teach. All I know is the area that I'm in. That's the language I know."**

Dylan is protective in the extreme about his private life and manages to answer even the most respectful enquiry about them in terms so vague as to be inpenetrable. He has four grown-up

children – Jesse, Anne, Samuel and Jakob from a ten-year marriage to a former model, Sara Lowndes, which ended in divorce in 1977. The youngest, 28 year-old Jakob, is lead singer of a currently highly successful rock band, the Wallflowers. Their most recent LP, *Bringing Down the Horses*, has now sold more than three million copies reportedly, more than any album Dylan himself has released. **"People ask me how I feel about that, as if I wouldn't be pleased."** His father says, genuinely bewildered. **"How do they think I feel? My feeling is that it's fantastic. I hope he sells 100 million."**

Although the wealth of reference books and fan volumes assembled in his honour have linked his name with various others since the divorce, there is no evidence of a current partner: indeed, several of the songs on *Time Out Of Mind* paint him as the victim of still-painful heartbreak. Dylan's unwillingness to discuss not only this but also all other, far less personal aspects of his off-duty life serves only to bolster one's sense of a man who exists solely within a spotlight. Someone brought alive again each night on a stage somewhere around the world, but otherwise forever rootless and a willing slave to that never-ending tour.

But, of course, the fact is that he does have a domestic life, and a very comfortable one – a mansion in Malibu, say the pop historians, and a farm outside Minneapolis. He even likes to tread the greens and fairways, just like any other 56-year-old with a little time on his hands and the need for some gentle exercise. **"How come everybody is so interested to know my handicap?"** he demands, not understanding that we are fascinated by the very fact that Bob Dylan, voice of a generation, plays golf.

Ultimately, all the various polite evasions underline his own original point — that his is a trade like any other, and he is simply a working musician, not a self-promoting celebrity of whom we have the right to demand such details. Meanwhile, he has veered off into an affirmation of how accepting early British audiences were of his music, more so even than American ones, and how he still listens to and loves the music of performers he met here on his earliest visits, particularly that of the folk singer Martin Carthy.

Suddenly, I remember. Having read previously of the mutual admiration between the two and because I hoped he might like it (but also, in truth, in case an ice-breaker were needed), I have brought him a copy of the 1996 Mercury Prize-nominated album Norma Waterson, the first-ever solo recording by Carthy's wife. Dylan looks so pleased to receive it that I am embarrassed. **"Heh-heh-heh,"** he laughs delightedly, holding it out for his now hovering PR to see. **"Well, thank you very much."**

We are about to be parted, but he draws me back to him for a final observation. **"I'm just so glad that you like this particular record,"** he says of my enthusiasm for *Time Out of Mind*. **"In fact, I'm very overwhelmed. I'm used to my records just being slagged off and my shows misrepresented. That's what I'm used to, You just get used to it. You have to. If you expect to go on, you have to get used to being slagged off and misrepresented in all kinds of ways. I'm no longer used to the acceptance of a record. I think that it would take me a while to get used to it. So, thank you."**

And then he is gone, and I am left behind, hardly able to believe that Bob Dylan has just said such a thing to me. That he should have needed to at all, and that he meant it.

December 1997
Robert Hilburn Interview, Santa Monica, California

Source: *The Fiddler Now Upspoke*, pp. 1157-1161.

This interview was published in the *Calendar* supplement of the *Los Angeles Times* of December 14 1997. Robert Hilburn is the *Times'* pop music critic. It also appeared in *Paris Match* of February 19, 1998.

REBORN AGAIN

After admittedly losing his way in the '80s, Bob Dylan returns as an artist with something to say – and an album he actually enjoys.

In *Time Out of Mind* Bob Dylan's most acclaimed album in 20 years, there are moments that sound like the reflections of a man who is nearing the last rites.

"*When you think that you've lost everything, you find out that you could always lose a little more,*" Dylan sings in one song that summarizes the soul of the album, which, in contrast to the youthful optimism of his landmark '60s works, focuses on love and life at a time when options and expectations have been greatly lowered.

So it's surprising to see the classic songwriter in an upbeat, even playful mood as he sits this evening on a couch in a private room just off the lower lobby of a Santa Monica hotel.

Dylan, 56, has disliked interviews for years because he's always asked to reveal something about his personal life or to interpret his lyrics, whether from one of his socially conscious folk anthems like *Blowin' in the Wind* or a snarling, self-affirming rock anthem such as *Like a Rolling Stone*.

Even now, he quickly deflects questions about how much his songs, some of which express bitterness over relationships, are from his own experience.

Yet a smile accompanies his rejoinder, rather than the icy defiance that he once might have shown. **"They are songs meant to be sung,"** he says when pressed on the autobiographical aspect. **"I don't know if they are meant to be discussed around the coffee table."**

It's easy to see why Dylan is in good spirits. *Time Out of Mind*, his first collection of new songs in seven years, was not only hailed by critics, but the album, which entered the pop charts at No. 10 in October, has also already been declared gold (sales of 500,000). It's his first gold studio collection since 1983's *Infidels*. The album (his 40th including retrospectives) brings his total U.S. sales to nearly 31 million.

Dylan, whose songwriting in the '60s revolutionized rock by bringing commentary and literary ambition to a musical form that had chiefly relied simply on attitude and energy, also received the prestigious Kennedy Center Honor last Sunday in Washington, DC. About Dylan, President Clinton said, "He probably had more impact on people of my generation than any other artist."

But it becomes clear during the interview that there is a deeper reason for Dylan's sense of satisfaction – one that grows out of what he describes as the rediscovery in recent years of the

self-identity as a performer that he lost during the acclaim and hoopla of his '70s and '80s arena and stadium tours.

"I remember playing shows [with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers in the '80s] **and looking out** [thinking] **I didn't have that many fans coming to see me,"** he says. **"They were coming to see Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers."**

About that period, he adds, **"I was going on my name for a long time, name and reputation; which was about all I had. I had sort of fallen into an amnesia spell... I didn't feel I knew who I was on stage..."**

But Dylan says he regained his sense of identity and purpose in the hundreds of concerts he has done in the '90s, an ambitious series of mostly theater dates that has been dubbed by the media the Never Ending Tour. That invigorating experience apparently contributed to the creative outburst in the new album.

On the eve of a sold-out, five-night stand at the El Rey Theatre, Dylan – who says he feels fine after being hospitalized in May for treatment of pericarditis – speaks about the new album, the "missing" years and gingerly, about the success of his son Jakob's band, the Wallflowers.

RH: You seem to be in good spirits. Do you think the word "happy" might even apply?

BD: I think that it's hard to find happiness as a whole in anything. [laughs] **The days of tender youth are gone. I think you can be delirious in your youth, but as you get older, things happen. We take our instruction from the media. The media just gloats over tragedy and sin and shame, so why are people supposed to feel any different?**

RH: Some of the words used by critics to describe the songs in the album are... brooding, gloomy, misery, wary. Do you see the album that way?

BD: I don't know... It's certainly not an album of felicity... I try to live within that line between despondency and hope. I'm suited to walk that line, right between the fire ... I see [the album] **right straight down the middle of the line, really.**

RH: Why were your two albums before this one simply acoustic songs by other writers? Did it take this long to write these songs?

BD: I had written these songs, but... I forgot about recording for a while. I didn't feel like I wanted to put forth the effort to record anything. The acoustic albums were easy enough. I was pretty content to let it be that.

RH: What was different about this album?

BD: Part of the – I don't know what you want to call it – maybe the effectiveness of these songs is the fact that they weren't just written and taken into the studio the way so many of my songs have been, where you are stuck with the arrangement, stuck with who's playing on them, stuck with the lyrics. So many of my records were made that way. So many that people elevate on such a high level were in some sense only first drafts of songs... and they have changed over the years. I had lived with these songs long enough to know what I wanted.

RH: The 16-minute *Highlands* is the highlight of the album. How did that song come about?

BD: I had the guitar run off an old Charley Patton record [in his head] **for years and always wanted to do something with that. I was sitting around, maybe in the dark Delta or maybe in some unthinkable trench somewhere, with that sound in my mind and the dichotomy of the highlands with that seemed to be a Path worth pursuing.**

RH: What about writing the song? Is it something you do in one sitting or is it something you piece together over time?

BD: It starts off as a stream of consciousness thing and you add things to it. I take things from all parts of life and then I see if there is a connection, and if there's a connection I

connect them. The riff was just going repeatedly, hypnotically in my head, then the words eventually come along. Probably every song on the album came that way.

RH: There are a dozen lines in that song alone that it'd be interesting to have you talk about, but how about the one with Neil Young? *"I'm listening to Neil Young/I gotta turn up the sound/Someone's always yelling,/'Turn it down. '"* Is that a tip of the hat or...?

BD: It's anything you want it to be. [smiles]. **I don't give too much thought to individual lines. If I thought about them in any kind of deep way, maybe I wouldn't use them because I'd always be second-guessing myself. I learned a long time ago to trust my intuition.**

RH: How do you feel when one album is praised much more than another one? Do you understand why people respond differently to albums or do you think a lot of it seems arbitrary?

BD: I never listen to my albums, once they are completed. I don't want to be reminded. To me, I've done them. I find it like looking into a lifeless mirror. I do, however, listen to this album quite a bit.

RH: If you were so pleased with these songs, why didn't you do them in concert before you recorded them if you had them for so long?

BD: That's the funny thing. People don't think they can respond to a song that they haven't heard on a record. It didn't used to be that way, but I think we are living in an age where we are so bombarded – everything from satellite news to biological weapons – and people want to be familiar with something before they are ready to accept it.

RH: Even your fans? Aren't they a pretty adventurous bunch?

BD: I don't know. I don't think I have the same fans I had earlier. In fact. I know they aren't the same people. Those fans left me years ago. If I was a fan of me back then, I wouldn't [still] **be either.**

RH: What do you mean?

BD: I wasn't giving anybody anything that they felt comfortable with, and I understood that, but I understood it much later than it was happening. I don't have any one kind of fan or follower of this kind of music, like say, U2, or Bruce [Springsteen] **or any of these young groups today who consistently keep their followers because what they are doing is variations of the same things. My situation is peculiar. I didn't come out of the same environment. My tradition is older than all that. I came out of the environment of folk music.**

RH: Is there any way to describe your goals when you were starting out?

BD: I knew growing up that I wanted to do something different than anybody else. I wanted to do something that no one else did or could do, and I wanted to do it better than anyone else had. I didn't know where that was going to lead me, but where it did lead me was to folk music at a time when it was totally off the radar screen. Maybe there were 12 people in all of America who even heard of Woody Guthrie, Roscoe Holcomb, the Carter Family, Lead belly – at least 12 people my age. They were free spirits who took chances, and I never wished to annul any of that spirit.

RH: You've never seemed comfortable with your success and acclaim. Is that true?

BD: I'm still not. I still don't consider myself in the same realm as someone like James Taylor or Randy Newman, someone who, in my book, is a "songwriter for the times". I feel my stuff is very hard-edged and not everybody's cup of tea.

RH: You've been touring for more than 30 years now. Do you see a time when you might stop? Or do you think you'll be doing it until your final breath?

BD: I could stop any time... I can see an end to everything really.

RH: You did once stop playing for eight years, during the late 60's. Why were you off the road for so long?

BD: I didn't want to go on the road. I didn't feel it was as important to me as personal matters. I had a family. It wouldn't work for me if I was out on the road. So I stayed off. Then we came to California and I forgot what I did [on stage]... **totally... When I got**

back [on tour in 1974]**, I was looked upon as a songwriter of a generation or mouthpiece of a generation. That was the slogan put on me at the time. I had to meet that head on.**

RH: Was that uncomfortable?

BD: Sure, because when I went back [to touring]**, nothing was working right for me... I had lost my raison d'être... I didn't know what I was doing out there, people throwing flowers and whatever. I didn't know who they expected me to be. It was a crazy time.**

RH: So, what turned it around for you?

BD: At a certain point [on the Petty tour]**, I had a revelation about a bunch of things, which is hard to explain** [briefly]... **I realized that it was necessary to go put and turn things around.**

RH: How did you do that?

BD: On some night when lightning strikes, this gift was given back to me and I knew it... The essence was back.

RH: So you learned to enjoy yourself again on stage in recent years?

BD: Yes, it took a long time to develop back into what it would have been if I hadn't taken the time off. It's a strange story, I'll admit it.

RH: Speaking of joy, what about Jakob's success with the Wallflowers?

BD: It's sensational what has happened to the Wallflowers. It's like one in a million or something.

RH: When you heard he was going to start a band, did you worry about him? Did you advise him at all?

BD: It was inconsequential what I thought.

RH: As a father, though, were you worried about all he would have to go through, like the pain of being dropped by his label after the first album?

BD: I was concerned after the label dropped him and they still were involved in trying to get another record deal, but he made it on his own. If anything, his name would have held him back. I think that held him back on his first record, to tell you the truth. I think that first record would have been accepted if he wasn't who he was.

RH: What about honors, such as the Kennedy honors? Do you appreciate them?

BD: It's always nice to be appreciated, especially while you are still alive.

23 January 1998
A note from Bob Dylan, Carl Perkins' Funeral Service, R.E. Womack Chapel, Lambuth University, Jackson, Tennessee

Source: *TWM* #1387(4036) in *ISIS*#80, 8-9/98, p. 18

Carl Perkins' funeral service took place on Friday, 23 January 1998 in the R. E. Womack Chapel on the campus of Lambuth University in Jackson, TN. Some 650 mourners attended there while many more watched on CCTV. During the service, Wynona Judd read a note pinned to the flower arrangement sent by Dylan (who was on tour with Van Morrison in New England): **He really stood for freedom. That whole sound stood for all degrees of freedom. It would just jump off the turntable… we wanted to go where that was happening.**

25 February 1998
Bob Dylan Acceptance Speech, 40th Grammy Awards Ceremony, Radio City Music Hall, New York City, New York

Source: *Circulating tape*

Yeah, all right. Well, I've got to mention them, Columbia Records, Tommy Mottola, Don Ienner — Don Ienner heard these songs way back when and convinced me to put it out — although his favorite songs aren't on it — but he put it out anyway. Larry Jenkins has been down in the trenches all the way from Italy to England and back again... Daniel Lanois, who helped produce this, and Mark Howard — can't forget that. We got a particular sound on this record which you don't get every day. Everybody worked extra-special hard, even the musicians. Augie Meyers from San Antonio... Jim Dickinson, my brother from down in Mississippi... and Cindy Cashdollar, Bucky Baxter, Tony Garnier, Jim Keltner, just every old body, David Kemper... everybody worked really hard on this and we didn't know what we had when we did it but we did it anyway.

And I just want to say that one time when I was about sixteen or seventeen years old, I went to see Buddy Holly play at, I don't know, Duluth National Guard Armory and I was three feet away from him... and he LOOKED at me. And I just have some sort of feeling that he was — I don't know how or why — but I know he was with us all the time we were making this record in some kind of way. In the words of, you know, the immortal Robert Johnson, "the stuff we got'll bust your brains out", and we tried to get that across. And this man right here, he was sort of instrumental in helping that out; I'm going to let him say a few words— Daniel Lanois. [laughter]

[applause]

16 May 1998
Susan Ross story on her relationship with Bob Dylan

Source: Daily Mail Weekend, 16 May 1998

I THOUGHT WE'D BE LIKE JOHN AND YOKO, PAUL AND LINDA. BUT DYLAN DOESN'T *NEED* A COMPANION — THAT'S THE TRAGEDY
by Mary Greene; Daily Mail Weekend, 16 May 1998

A forthcoming biography of Bob Dylan claims he had two secret marriages and five children he won't acknowledge publicly. Now the author, Susan Ross, has decided to go public on her 12-year affair with the rock legend. It is not, she says, a tawdry kiss-and-tell tale, but a plea for recognition from a man she claims is so self-consumed. he simply doesn't know he's destroying her. MARY GREENE reports

The big brass bed is the only thing in the room betraying a clue that Bob Dylan slept here. It is a bed that is as crumpled as Dylan's own face. It is tarnished, and slightly disheveled, the white, lace-trimmed duvet has been hastily plumped up by someone who rarely rises before noon. It isn't, sadly, Bob Dylan's own brass bed, celebrated in his love song *Lay Lady Lay*. Rather it belongs to the woman who claims to have been Dylan's lover for the past 12 years — and who recently went public with the intriguing story of his tangled private life and two secret marriages.

Dylan — the voice (some say poet) of Sixties protest — has always shrouded himself mystery, sowing disinformation about his origins, refusing to have his photograph taken. Millions of words have been written about him, without anything much having been said. And that is how he likes it. Long before he became legend, this was a man who had a deep urge not to be understood.

Today his self-proclaimed lover, Susan Ross — owner of the big brass bed — maintains that she is moved to tell her story, not out of vengeance but out of weariness at playing by Dylan's rules. She is hurt that he has never publicly acknowledge their long affair.

In writing her book — which has yet to be published — she has infuriated Dylan who has not spoken to her for two months. But she says it is simply a challenge to his humanity. Her ultimatum is that after 12 years she wants recognition and companionship as well as sex. She paints a revealing picture of a man she says she cares for deeply, even though she claims he is an inconsiderate lover who is emotionally and physically distant.

Tellingly, she calls him Zimmerman, the name he was born with — as if Bob Dylan were too big a concept to carry into a relationship. 'He is very proud of being Bob Dylan,' she says, 'but he's stifled by it.'

The Bob Dylan she describes is a rolling stone who seeks normality behind the closed doors of her $300-a-month, rent-controlled Manhattan bedsit. There, his trademark hood pulled over his head, Dylan is unrecognisable. He was once refused entry by Ross's doorman who mistook him for a vagrant seeking shelter.

If you give credence to Susan Ross's story, it can safely be assumed that the gravel-voiced singer — once graphically described as sounding like a sea lion with emphysema — is the enduring passion of her life. The bigger question is, what, if anything, Susan Ross means to him?

It is a question the 46-year-old legal assistant readily asks herself. 'If he wants to have sex with a woman in another city when he is on tour,' she says, 'that is up to him. He has never been able to get the big picture from one woman. We are not, either of us, conventional people. I always know when he has slept with another woman. What I care about is that when I am with him, I am queen. I want to be accorded respect.

'I thought we'd be like John and Yoko, Paul and Linda. But he doesn't *need* a companion. That's the tragedy. I said once: "Why don't we live together?" and he said: **'Because I can barely live with myself.'**"

It was five years into their affair before Dylan, jealously guarding his privacy, even invited Ross to his Malibu mansion. She flew to Los Angeles, naïvely imagining that this represented one giant leap into a normal relationship. When she got there, he backtracked, unable to handle this invasion of his private space. She drove through the gate and passed an ageing hippie loitering for a glimpse of the living legend. She drove past a motorbike abandoned in long grass behind the barn, past the horses in a small corral and a coop of chickens and roosters, then along the drive bordered by metal sculptures to the domed house, guarded by a pack of mastiffs.

Ross describes it as a whimsical cross between the Taj Mahal, a ski chalet and an American summer camp. She arrived there and then, says Ross, Dylan showed her to the guest bedroom. He made the excuse that he couldn't sleep in his own bed. Ross was not to be allowed to sleep in the legend's bedroom.

Dylan, she quickly discovered, would not be pushed into commitment. On her 40th birthday, he stood her up; she spent the evening in tears and alone. She says she had wanted to marry him and had cut out a Tiffany's advert from the Sunday papers; Dylan conceded, grudgingly, that she could go to the store, alone, to select a diamond. She was fully aware, she says, that this was not to be an engagement ring, just a gift for a milestone birthday. She picked out a modest $2,000 stone then other rings at $5,000, $10,000 and $19,000. 'I figured I'd give him options. I didn't want him to feel obligated.' The diamond didn't materialise nor, on the night of her birthday, did Dylan.

She wrote to him, asking him not to call her again. She has kept his reply, a typed, unsigned postcard postmarked Stamford, Connecticut, 1992. He reproached her with having hurt his feelings. **'Everybody has them. Mine sometime may be a bit penurious, but they're there. Anyway, if there's a change lemme know.'**

It was on November 13, 1985, that Susan Ross met Bob Dylan. There is a photograph to prove it — the only photograph — but Dylan is so famously camera-shy, that in itself may not be so surprising. She is wearing an off-the-shoulder pale blue, Fifties lace cocktail dress — a $10 charity shop bargain because, as ever, she was broke. Bob, with his tangled curls, is wearing dark glasses and an oversized white jacket. Susan gives the camera a sidelong glance, reminiscent of the young Princess Diana. She is out of her depth at this record company party at New York's Whitney Museum, where the glittering cast includes Billy Joel and Christie Brinkley, Davie Bowie and Robert DeNiro.

At the time of her meeting Dylan, Susan was 33, and had just pulled herself out of morass of degradation and self-abuse. She had been clean of drugs for six months — but Ross readily confesses more than a passing acquaintance with the seamiest strata of, New York life.

She was born into a wealthy, if dysfunctional, upper middle-class Jewish family. Her father was a vice president of the Revlon corporation. Woody Allen, she says, is a second cousin twice removed. Susan learned piano at three and at ten became pupil at the prestigious Juilliard music school in New York. She dropped out of three schools worked on an underground magazine, then spent the Seventies in a snowstorm of cheap and readily available cocaine.

She was one of the first female roadies in rock n' roll, travelling with bands like the Moody Blues, Yes, ELO and Jackson Browne. On the day in 1985 when she admitted she had hit rock bottom, she cut herself off from her friends, her dealer-boyfriend, her way of life and took waitressing job to start her life over again.

Three days after their first meeting, Bob Dylan turned up at the rundown hotel where Susan lived. She asked the manager if she could borrow his room for the occasion. Dylan carried Susan's television upstairs; she was worried they might be stuck for conversation. She played him a tape of her own music, which he dismissed as **'just another bar band'**. She realised he couldn't remember her name. When he kissed her, she says, he had 'all the finesse of a tenth grader, struggling with his zipper in the back of a car'. She had determined, anyway, not to let things go too far. He didn't press her. **'That's too bad,'** he said, casually, **'we'll probably never sleep together then.'**

It was six months before they did sleep together. Dylan still couldn't remember her name. 'I got rip-snorting drunk out of nervousness. He was ready to dismiss me when he'd finished,' she said. That first night together, Susan Ross claims she became pregnant and later had an abortion. 'That's the greatest regret of my life. Bob was horrified. He loves children. But it seemed too soon. I didn't want him to think I was trying to trap him.'

Susan Ross would unhesitatingly admit that these are the tawdry confessions of any rock star groupie. Yet from this unpromising beginning, she says that a relationship developed. Dylan would phone every day for three weeks, then disappear without explanation for a month; they saw each other as the relentless demands of his Never Ending tour allowed. Her status, if she had any in Dylan's eyes, was never publicly acknowledged. Even when he bought her a present of a cashmere scarf it was to hide her face when the walked together along the streets of Manhattan.

His life, she soon learned, was rigidly compartmentalised, and he was a control freak, who kept each compartment hermetically sealed. In truth, the only woman who has ever been accorded public standing in Bob Dylan's life is his ex-wife Sara, a former bunny girl. Dylan adopted Sara's daughter from a previous marriage, and they had four children of their own: Jesse, who works in films, Anna, Samuel and Jakob, now lead singer with his own successful band The Wallflowers.

Dylan and Sara divorced, vituperatively, in 1977. One morning she is said to have found him at the family breakfast table with her children — and another woman. Perversely, Dylan went on to have an affair with the children's therapist. Susan Ross offers a tellingly poignant detail recalled from her visits to his Malibu home. On the wall is framed painting by his daughter Anna: 'I'm so glad,' she has written, 'you finally became good father.'

As Ross became more infatuated with her famous lover, her life became a self-flagellating mission to piece together the facts of his life. If she asked him questions, he would blank her. 'He'll just look through you. He is so used to cutting out fans who come up and ask silly questions.'

She now believes that he has been married secretly at different times to two of his backing singers — Clydie King and Carol Woods — by whom he has a total of three children, the youngest a 12-year-old daughter, Narette. Dylan is said still to be on friendly terms with Woods, and misses her. Ross also calculates that he had two children by Broadway star and gospel singer Carolyn Dennis. Certainly, it is documented that he was with the effusive, maternal Clydie King through most of the early Eighties. Rolling Stone Ron Wood recalled them once as 'chalk and cheese... her a black, outrageous, hamburger-eating soul singer and Bob all quiet and white, nibbling off the side of her hamburger. I always remember him trying to share her hamburger, and she was bossing him around and stuff. He needed it at the time'.

For Ross and Dylan, a kind of intimacy developed — and maybe she is right when she says she is as close to him as anyone. If there is any single reason why you feel inclined to believe her story, it is for the small humiliations she divulges against herself. 'Bob is not an abuser, he is a torturer,' she says. 'He does not mean to hurt you or to hurt your feelings. It's just that he's so self-consumed, he doesn't realise he's destroying you on the way. You're just in the line of fire.'

She wrote him long letters: In one, written five years after they met, she reproached him: 'Did you forget you had just gotten married when we first slept together? Or did you just forget to tell me?'

Curiously, what binds her to him, she claims, is not sexual energy. 'He is not a considerate lover. He doesn't think about you. He is the warmest, the wittiest, the closest... but physically? Forget it!' Indeed, she claims that during the most intense phase of their relationship, Dylan — a heavy drinker who gave up drinking five years ago — was impotent. In the aftermath of her 40th birthday, she told him she felt unable to carry on without his commitment. 'He was still drinking then. It was real bad,' she recalls. 'He got really sad and said: **"I know."** He was impotent because of the drink. It was like, **"How can I marry this woman?"**'

Susan Ross still, against 12 years of evidence, nurtures hopes that Dylan will make the commitment that will say to the world at large that she means more to him than an available big brass bed when he touches base in New York. She could even be justified in believing that he is as close to her as he is to anybody.

Yet she concedes that their relationship hit its lowest ebb last year when Dylan lay in hospital with a potentially fatal heart inflammation. His daughters were at his bedside; Ross did not aspire to join them. What she cannot forgive is that, desperately anxious, she had to learn of his recovery from the media.

At that point she decided she might as well break Dylan's rules and recount her story. She wrote him another letter: 'It is my way of becoming visible, instead of being another secret in your life. I am tired of having people think I am delusional when I remark casually that I've been with Bob Dylan for ten years.'

Who is to know whether Dylan now rues the day he put his name to a reference, in support of Susan Ross's application for a university writing course: **'Susan is an excellent writer,'** he wrote. **'Her work has always impressed me. She doesn't waste words. Thank you, sincerely, Bob Dylan.'**

20 May 1998
A Note from Bob Dylan, Frank Sinatra's Funeral Service, Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Beverly Hills, California

Source: *TWM* 1368 (3988) in *ISIS* 79 6-7/98, p. 13

Frank Sinatra's funeral mass took place at the Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Beverley Hills (505 North Bedford Drive) on Wednesday, 20 May 1998, starting at 12 noon, local time. His coffin had been carried into the church the previous evening for a vigil service.

Several newspapers listed Dylan among the mourners at the funeral mass, a few indicating that some of the same people had attended the vigil service, the night before. One report indicated that Dylan had also attended the vigil service.

Approached by the press, Dylan's publicist offered the following statement from Dylan:

Right from the beginning, he was there with the truth of things in his voice. His music had an influence on me, whether I knew it or not. He was one of the very few singers who sang without a mask. It's a sad day.

Sometime 1998?
Murray Engleheart Interview (for *Beat*)

This version comes from "Beat" magazine, Melbourne, 19 August 1998

BOB DYLAN
by Murray Engleheart

Getting a solid grasp on just how influential Bob Dylan has been over the last near 40 years is a mind boggling task. Bruce Springsteen came close when he said that without Dylan the Beatles wouldn't have made *Sgt Pepper*, The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* wouldn't exist, the Sex Pistols' *God Save The Queen* wouldn't have set England alight and U2 wouldn't have stirred hearts and souls with *Pride*. It's not an exhaustive list. But it's a damn good start. When I raise Springsteen's remarks Dylan is momentarily lost for words. Not so much because of the enormity of what was said but because Springsteen is like a brother to him.

"Well," Dylan sighs then chuckles, **"I mean we can influence all kinds of people but sometimes it gets in the way. Especially if you're influencing somebody, if somebody is accusing you of influencing somebody that you had no intention of influencing at all."**

"I've never given it any mind at all really. I don't really care to really influence anybody at this time and if I have influenced anybody what can I say?"

It was the strangest thing. It was 1986 and Bob Dylan had just wrapped up a Sydney press conference at the start of his Australian tour with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. He stood up after the final question and applauded the assembled media.

For the last year or so Dylan, who is in the country for his fifth tour of Australia, has himself been on the receiving end of yet another round of applause for his stunning, triple Grammy Award winning album, *Time Out Of Mind*. It's a rebirth recording that has masterfully redefined Dylan. With it has come some amazing professional scenarios for the man, such as playing for the Pope in September reportedly at the request of his Holiness and receiving a Kennedy Center Honors Award in December with Bill Clinton, Gregory Peck and Charlton Heston looking on.

Time Out Of Mind however is the real prize. The album was recorded just before Dylan fell ill with an infection around his heart in May last year. But for all it's excellence the man didn't feel it would have been a suitable closing chapter.

"No, I don't think so. I think we were just starting with getting my identifiable sound onto the disc. I think we just started. I think there's plenty more to do. We just opened up that door at that particular time and in the passage of time we'll go back in and extend that. But I didn't feel like it was an ending to anything. I thought it was more the beginning."

Famed American writer and critic, Greil Marcus, once observed that it always seems to be night when the recordings of bluesman, Skip James, are playing. The exact same case I tell Dylan could be made for *Time Out Of Mind*. He is entranced at the notion.

"It sounds like Skip James?" he quizzes enthusiastically. In a sense. Marcus was saying his records sound best at night and...

"Oh, yeah, yeah. That would be a tremendous compliment to me to hear that, that I would have any kind of appeal like Skip James would have. I'd never seen that before. But if anything it would probably radiate the same kind of intensity that Skip James would do. I would hope that it would be in that kind of a realm anyway."

Apart from Skip James the album is almost intangibly accented by other blues icons like Charlie Patton and Robert Johnson as well as the sort of primal rock n' roll sounds that were created in Sun Studios in Memphis circa the late 50s. Those elements seem more obvious than usual.

"Well, it's always there," explains Dylan, **"it always has been there. But in the past when my records were made, which disillusioned me actually from making the records,**

producers or whoever's in charge of my sessions, they felt it's enough just to have me singing an original song. So the orchestration of those songs really never got fully developed."

"*Time Out Of Mind* is more illuminated in something which is completely articulate rather than just a song and just the singing of that song. Arrangements or structures can be really thought about and entangled into it."

Maybe it's just the overall ambience of the recording but *Time Out Of Mind* seems to have a multitude of ghosts running through it. Even Dylan's voice has an other worldly quality to it at times.

"I'm not versed in the psychological part of it. I don't know. The ghosts you're probably talking about are probably just instruments that are more in the background as opposed to being in the front and in the side. And just different echoes which emanate from just the complete sound of the record, something which will protrude but in any case make themselves noticed."

Getting noticed is not something that Dylan strives for. He doesn't have to. His work quietly takes the podium for him, just as *Time Out Of Mind* has done. It bears the same hallmark of certain and undeniable greatness as his other classic recordings like *Highway 61 Revisited*, *Blonde On Blonde*, *Blood On The Tracks* and *Infidels*. Is the man himself able to sense his own magic in those recordings?

"Well, those records were made a long time ago and you know truthfully records that were made in that day and age all were good. They all had some magic to them because the technology didn't go past what the artist was doing. So it was a lot easier to get excellence back in those days on a record than it is now."

"So, as far as the records I made back then, I made records back then just like a lot of other people who were my age and we all made good records. Those records seem to cast a long shadow. But how much of it is the technology and how much of it is the talent and influence, I really don't know. I know you can't make records that sound that way any more. The high priority is technology now. It's not the artist or the art. It's the technology which is coming through."

Dylan would be the first to tell you that he's not a Messiah. He's not even a naughty boy. Any notion then that he might be creating too great an expectation is treated accordingly.

"My concerts are populated by people who wouldn't be there if they were just there looking at a figurehead. They just wouldn't be there. They'd come once and they wouldn't come back."

Bob Dylan plays the Mercury Lounge tonight (but that sold out in minutes). He also plays Melbourne Park this Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd August with special guest Patti Smith.

Sometime 1998?
Murray Engleheart Interview (for *Guitar World*)

This version comes from "Guitar World" magazine (US/EU) – March 1999 issue

MAXIMUM BOB
Profile: Bob Dylan
Guitar World, March 1999 Murray Engleheart

In little over a year, he's won a Grammy, survived a dangerous illness, hobnobbed with religious royalty and toured endlessly. He's Bob Dylan, forever young prince of rock and roll.
by Murray Engleheart

"WE SEEM TO BE ATTRACTING A NEW AUDIENCE. NOT JUST THOSE WHO KNOW ME AS SOME KIND OF FiGuReHeaD FROM ANOTHER AGE."

Bob Dylan, who for much of his fabled career has been the hippest, has now spent more than a year being the hottest as well. He's the man on everyone's A-list, from Eddie Vedder, an avowed fan, to Pope John Paul II, for whom Dylan performed three songs in Bologna, Italy. Dylan even impressed the online retailer amazon.com, which recently voted Bob Dylan Live l966: The "*Royal Albert Hall*" Concert the best album of 1998. As remarkable as it seems, one of the most vital post-grunge artists in rock is 58-year-old Bob Dylan. After a rather lean decade, the Sixties folk-rock icon has, against all odds, revitalized his career by polishing off the Nineties with two albums that rank among his very best.

Along with the highly acclaimed "*Albert Hall*" reissue, Dylan's 1997 Grammy-winning release, *Time Out of Mind*, produced by Daniel Lanois, has put the singer back in rock's vanguard.

Perhaps even more remarkable than Dylan's albums have been his brilliant live shows, showcasing his feisty lead guitar playing and a crack band. After bouncing back from a life-threatening heart infection in mid-'97, Dylan has played well over 200 shows, performing fierce, jam-oriented reinterpretations of his best songs, at times recalling the tightly wound, three-guitar army of Lynyrd Skynyrd's "*Free Bird*." It's been a far cry from the disappointingly ramshackle shows that became his stock-in-trade in the Eighties and early Nineties.

When Bob Dylan talks—which is rarely—people listen. Especially these days. We recently had the opportunity for a brief chat with the enigmatic legend, who finally took a break from what has come to be known as his "Never Ending Tour." The relaxed Dylan was kind enough to reflect on the turbulent events of his recent career, and to speculate on his future.

ME: Bruce Springsteen once said that without you there'd be no Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's*, no Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, no Sex Pistols "*God Save the Queen*."

BD: Well... you know, you can influence all kinds of people, but sometimes it gets in the way—especially if somebody is accusing you of influencing somebody that you had no interest in influencing in the first place. I've never given it any mind at all, really. I don't really care to influence anybody at this time, and if I have influenced anybody, what can I say?

ME: Certain albums of yours—*Blood on the Tracks*, *Infidels*, *Highway 61 Revisited*—inspired great critical plaudits in their day, and have stood the test of time. In your view, do those records live up to their reputation?

BD: Well, those records were made a long time ago, and you know, truthfully, records that were made in that day and age all were good. They all had some magic to them because the technology didn't go beyond what the artist was doing. It was a lot easier to get excellence back in those days on a record than it is now. I made records back then just like a lot of other people who were my age, and we all made good records. Those

records seem to cast a long shadow. But how much of it is the technology and how much of it is the talent and influence, I really don't know.

I know you can't make records that sound that way any more. The high priority is technology now. It's not the artist or the art. It's the technology that is coming through. That's what makes *Time Out of Mind*... it doesn't take itself seriously, but then again, the sound is very significant to that record. If that record was made more haphazardly, it wouldn't have sounded that way. It wouldn't have had the impact that it did. The guys that helped me make it went out of their way to make a record that sounds like a record played on a record player. There wasn't any wasted effort on *Time Out of Mind*, and I don't think there will be on any more of my records.

ME: A writer once noted that Delta bluesman Skip James' records always sound best at night. The same could be said about *Time Out of Mind*.

BD: You think it sounds like Skip James?

ME: In a sense. *Time Out of Mind* sounds best late at night.

BD: That would be a tremendous compliment to me, to hear that it was even in any kind of... that it would be in the same realm as Skip James.

ME: In terms of mood and ambience, it's almost like there's ghosts running through it. Are those ghosts of, or for, anybody in particular?

BD: Er, no. I'm not versed in tile psychological part of it. I don't know. The ghosts you're probably talking about are just probably where the instruments are placed in the mix. Some are more in the background as opposed to being in the foreground. Or maybe you're just hearing different echoes that emanate from the complete sound of the record.

ME: Jim Dickinson, who played keyboards on *Time Out of Mind*, said something years ago that I thought was fascinating. He said that a lot of people don't realize that the recording process is about freeze-framing the soul.

BD: Yeah. The recording process is very difficult for me. I lose my inspiration in the studio real easy, and it's very difficult for me to think that I'm going to eclipse anything that I've done before. I get bored easily, and my mission, which starts out wide, becomes very dim after a few failed takes and this and that.

ME: There are elements of country blues and Sun Records production quality on the album.

BD: Well, it's always been there. But in the past, when my records were made, the producer, or whoever was in charge of my sessions, felt it was just enough to have me sing an original song. There was never enough work put into developing the orchestration, and that always made me feel very disillusioned about recording. *Time Out of Mind* is more illuminated, rather than just a song and the singing of that song. The arrangements or structures are really an integral part of the whole.

ME: *Time Out of Mind* was recorded just before you fell ill.

BD: That's right.

ME: Would you have regarded it as a satisfactory final chapter for you?

BD: No, I don't think so. I think we are just starting to get my sound on disc, and I think there's plenty more to do. We just opened up that door at that particular time, and in the passage of time we'll go back in and extend that. But I didn't feel like it was an ending to anything. I thought it was more the beginning.

ME: You've mentioned Buddy Holly in connection with the album. What did his spirit bring to the record?

BD: Buddy Holly. You know, I don't really recall exactly what I said about Buddy Holly, but while we were recording, every place I turned there was Buddy Holly. You know what I mean? It was one of those things. Every place you turned. You walked down a hallway and you heard Buddy Holly records, like "*That'll Be the Day*." Then you'd get in the car to go over to the studio and "*Rave On*" would be playing. Then you'd walk into this studio and someone's playing a cassette of "*It's so Easy*." And this would happen day after day after day. Phrases of Buddy Holly songs would just come out of nowhere. It

was spooky. [laughs] **But after we recorded and left, you know, it stayed in our minds. Well, Buddy Holly's spirit must have been someplace, hastening this record.**

ME: There seems to be a renewed interest in your music, particularly among young people. Have you noticed a shift in your audience?

BD: Ah, no, I haven't found any shift, but I've found a different audience. I'm not good at reading how old people are, but my audience seems to be livelier than they were 10 years ago. They react immediately to what I do, and they don't come with a lot of preconceived ideas about who they would like me to be, or who they think I am. Whereas a few years ago they couldn't react quickly. They had to get through too much... er...

ME: Baggage?

BD: Mental, yeah, mental psychic stuff; so [sighs] I was still kind of bogged down with a certain crowd of people. It has taken a long time to bust through that crowd. Even the last time I toured with Tom Petty, we were kind of facing that same old crowd.

But that's changed. We seem to be attracting a new audience. Not just those who know me as some kind of figurehead from another age or a symbol or a generational thing. I don't really have to deal with that anymore, if I ever did.

ME: Do you find that choosing songs for your live performances gets harder or easier as the years go on?

BD: I have so many songs that finding them is the least of my problems. I've got songs that I've never even sung live. I've got 500, 600, 700 songs. I don't have a problem with the backlog of songs. Some fade away and diminish in time, but others take their place.

ME: While there seems there is plenty of room to improvise, your current live sound appears to be more tightly arranged than in previous years.

BD: If you're going to ask me what's the difference between now and when I used to play in the Seventies, Eighties and even back in the Sixties, the songs weren't arranged. The arrangement is the architecture of the song. And that's why our performances are so effective these days, because, measure for measure, we don't stray from the actual structure of the song. And once the architecture is in place, a song can be done in an endless amount of ways. That's what keeps my current live shows unadulterate it. Because they're not diluted, or they're not jumbled up. They're not scrambled, they're not just a bunch of screaming... a conglomerated sound mix.

It's like Skip James, who you mentioned earlier, once said: "I don't want to entertain. What I want to do is impress with skill and deaden the minds of my listeners." If you listen to his records—his old records–you know he can do that. But if you listen to the records he made in the Sixties, when they rediscovered him, you find that there's something missing. And what's missing is that interconnecting thread of the structure of the songs.

ME: What was the nature of your heart infection?

BD: It was something called histoplasmosis that came from just accidentally inhaling a bunch of stuff that was out on one of the rivers by where I live. Maybe one month, or one or two days out of the year; the banks around the river get all mucky, and then the wind blows and a bunch of swirling mess is in the air. I happened to inhale a bunch of that. That's what made me sick. It went into the heart area. But it wasn't anything really attacking my heart.

ME: You were pretty seriously ill, though?

BD: Oh, I was real seriously ill, yeah.

ME: Did that make you pause and rethink things?

BD: I really didn't, you know, because it wasn't something that I brought on myself. It's not like I even needed the time to slow down and re-examine my life. It was just one of those things. I was down for about six weeks, but I don't remember particularly having any kind of great illuminations at that time.

ME: The performance for the Pope at the World Eucharistic Congress in Bologna must have been tremendously moving for you.

BD: Well, it's all surreal, you know? But yeah, it was moving. I mean, he's the Pope. [laughs] **You know what I mean? There's only one lope, right?**

ME: Did the irony of playing "Knocking on Heaven's Door" in that situation strike you at the time?

BD: No, because that's the song they wanted to hear. It seemed to be a good correspondence to the situation.

November(?) 1998
Unknown Location, PBS Muddy Waters tribute comments

Source: *Circulating tape*

Comment #1

He heard there dark woods. He brought 'em up with him. He was able to keep that in the city.

Comment #2

I was fiddling with my radio. Out of nowhere just late at night just came "*Gypsy woman told my mother – ta-da-da-pom-pom*" and I said, "Wow!"

April 1999
Edna Gundersen interview for USA Today

Source: *On the Tracks* Vol 7, No 2 (OTT 17), Dec 15, 1999, pp. 8-9.

Two titans on tour
DYLAN & SIMON
by Edna Gundersen

Mr. Tambourine Man meets *Mrs. Robinson*. You can call them allies. Pop icons Bob Dylan and Paul Simon are teaming up for a U.S. tour destined to be summer's most celebrated double-header. The news is expected to thrill fans of both camps, but nobody is as delighted as the players themselves, whose fabled careers never intersected on a shared bill until now.

"I was right away excited about doing this," says Dylan, a fixture on the tour circuit.

Ditto for Simon, who hasn't toured since 1992. "It appealed to me immediately," he says...

"I think it's going to be a very successful tour," says Pollstar editor Gary Bongiovanni, who predicts the priciest tickets will sell out first. "It's an intelligent pairing, a formidable package that audiences are going to go for. With the market so crowded in the summer, these pairings are now a requirement."

Dylan and Simon, both 57, should draw older fans in droves, despite stiff competition for boomer bucks from reunions by Crosby, Stills, Hash & Young and Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band.

Aside from the pair's hits, what hooks beckon fans?

"Paul Simon hasn't toured in a real long time, and Dylan is in a major career resurgence, coming off the biggest year he's had in terms of gross sales," Bongiovanni says.

The two will swap headliner slots, with each performing a 75-minute set before uniting for a half-hour of duets.

Dylan may be considered the bigger draw, Bongiovanni says, "though the advantage Paul has over Dylan is that his fans haven't seen him in years, whereas Dylan's been touring pretty consistently.

<u>In exclusive interviews, Dylan and Simon spoke by phone Friday from Dew York, where they're sketching ideas for a dual encore</u>. While each could pack houses touring solo, they welcomed the partnership proposed by promoters at SFX.

"Lots of things about this appeal to me," Simon says. "I like Bob, I like his music, I've known him for a long time, and it's a nice chance to play. I like the idea of where we came from and what we evolved into. We came out of the same early rock n' roll context and took similar routes, though mine's more urban."

Dylan, who toured to great acclaim a year ago with Van Morrison and Joni Mitchell, says of Simon: **"I mean, he's written extraordinary songs, hasn't he? I consider him one of the pre-eminent songwriters of the times. Every song he does has got a vitality you don't find everywhere."**

Their paths have crossed over the years, most recently at a televised Willie Nelson birthday concert in Austin, Texas. Simon's wife, singer Edie Brickell, struck up a friendship with Dylan when they toured on the same bill. But for the most part, Dylan and Simon have toiled on parallel tracks.

"I had no preconceived notions," Simon says of the budding collaboration. "I find him easy to be around and easy to work with. When we were playing together earlier today, I was surprised at how much repertoire we had in common. He has a vast repertoire. He's really a great collector and studier of songs."

"We played a lot of things. I know lots of his songs, and he knew a bunch of mine. We're looking to do some things acoustically together. I like '*To Ramona*.' He likes '*Homeward*

Bound.' We went through quite a menu, from deep folk stuff to the Everly Brothers to Johnny Cash to country to blues. The blend of the guitars and our voices is interesting, particularly on the ballads."

Though he tends to radically alter his set list nightly, Dylan says he and Simon won't join on tunes that aren't **"somewhat rehearsed. There's a whole lot to pick from. I don't know what we'll do, but I'm pretty flexible. I've always liked '*Only Living Boy From New York*' and other songs from *Bridge Over Troubled Water*** (Simon & Garfunkel's chart-topping 1970 album)**. When I played with the Grateful Dead, we were doing 'Boy in the Bubble'** (from Graceland)**."**

Aside from their closing harmonies, Dylan and Simon are plotting distinct and personal shows.

"What I do isn't going to change," Dylan says. **"I do what I like regardless of what bill I'm on. That's where my fixation is, in performing, not in making records, although I will make them..."**

"Touring is more important to me than getting locked down in a record right now. I have a tough time in the studio. It's very frustrating for me."

Nonetheless, Dylan has been penning songs for a follow-up to 1997's Grammy-winning *Time out of Mind*, a critical and commercial triumph that arrived after a near-fatal bout of histoplasmosis (swelling of the sac around the heart caused by a fungal infection). Last year's long-awaited release of *Live 1966: The "Royal Albert Hall" Concert*, previously circulated as a treasured bootleg, also sent Dylan's creative stock soaring.

Dylan tries to ignore both praise and criticism but was pleased by *Time's* reception.

"I wasn't surprised so much, because most of those songs stand up pretty well against all my old songs, and I can't really say that about a lot of my records from the '80s or early '90s," he says. **"I kept the songs for a while and wrote and rewrote them. I didn't want to get them out in a swift way. I tried to take my time so the care I put into them could be heard on the finished record. I'm taking that approach again."**

A few new compositions echo the personal, spare tunes on *Time*. **"They're in that same tradition, pretty point-blank. The instrumentation will be decided later."**

Simon, resurfacing after his failed Broadway musical, *The Capeman*, also has an album in the works that should be 60% complete by the time he starts tour rehearsals in May. He'll return to the studio in September with hopes of releasing the album, his first batch of new pop tunes since 1990's *The Rhythm of the Saints*, by early 2000. He doubts he'll introduce new material onstage this summer.

"There are so many other songs I feel I should do," he says. "I haven't performed in six, seven years, and I feel I should do songs that I think people want to hear again. I'd like to sing something from *The Capeman*, which wasn't heard much, and I'd like to investigate tunes from *The Rhythm of the Saints*."

The Capeman's aborted run in 1998 did not sour Simon on the Great White Way.

"I just go wherever the best idea is," he says. "If I have an idea in theater that intrigues me, I wouldn't hesitate to go back. I feel the same about films. I'll go wherever it's interesting and the collaboration is stimulating."

Credited for popularizing exotic forms of music from Africa and South America, Simon says he was merely excavating his back yard.

"In '*Graceland*' or '*Mother and Child Reunion*,' I was investigating sources that American music had already incorporated," he says. "American music is inherently from all over the world. I have African and French musicians in my band who understand how the whole world is connected in music."

His music "comes from Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, but there's no need to break it down except to more deeply understand the sources we absorbed into our culture."

After delivering his first record in 1957 and chalking up 12 platinum albums plus best-album Grammys in three decades, Simon remains devoted to making music. Retirement, he says, is not a goal.

"The purpose is to be enthralled for the duration. That's what you hope and live for, to stay inspired."

Simon's long absence from the stage hasn't left him nervous or rusty.

"I didn't miss it, but I'm anxious to come back," he says. "I'm really looking forward to this."

Dylan laments the physical hardships of touring but cherishes his time in the spotlight.

"Touring is something you either love or hate doing. I've experienced both. I try to keep an open mind about it. Right now, I'm enjoying it. The crowds make the show. Going onstage, seeing different people every night in a combustible way, that's a thrill. There's nothing in ordinary life that even comes close to that."

May 1999
Sony/Columbia Publicity Statement on Dylan/Simon Touring

Source: *Dignity* issue 17, June/July 1999, pp. 10-11.

North America Tour with Paul Simon – Summer 1999

The following publicity statement was issued by Sony/Columbia to promote the US Tour – Bob Dylan and Paul Simon:

Together for the First Time

Singer Songwriters To Kick Off Historic Tour on June 6th

Bob Dylan and Paul Simon – two of the most influential and prolific songwriters of the last half century – will hit the road together for the first time for a historic tour beginning June 6th in Colorado Springs, CO at World Arena. Performing some the most memorable and revered songs of our time, Dylan and Simon -supported by their respective bands – will play amphitheatres and arenas across the country. Ironically, though long time admirers of each other's work, Dylan and Simon have never performed together in public, and may sing together during this epic outing.

The Bob Dylan/Paul Simon bill promises to be a highlight of the summer tour season and yet another remarkable milestone in the storied careers of these artists. Tickets go on sale throughout the country the weekend of April 10th, (times and dates vary).

Bob Dylan is enjoying one of the most remarkable periods of creative achievement and success of his career. His most recent album, the Platinum "*Time Out of Mind*" garnered three Grammy Awards, including Best Album, and became the artist's biggest selling release in 20 years. He continues to draw fans of all ages to his concerts, headlining arenas and other large venues on his consistent series of concert tours.

Multiple Grammy winner and distinguished singer songwriter Paul Simon has been a musical innovator throughout his career. Along with Dylan, Simon was one of the first musicians to fuse folk, pop, and rock in the early sixties, bringing this hybrid to national audiences through his early work. Following unparalleled success in the 70s and early 80s with hits like "*Loves Me Like Rock*" "*Kodachrome*" "*Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard,*" "*Slip Slidin' Away*" and "*50 Ways to Leave your Lover*" Simon virtually single-handedly introduced world and indigenous music to the masses through his groundbreaking late 80s and early 90s releases, "*Graceland*" and "*Rhythm of the Saints*."

"We have been great fans of each other for years and are really looking forward to touring together," say Dylan and Simon. **"This tour will give us the opportunity to honor each other's work while playing for our fans."**

To date, Simon is still the only artist to receive a Grammy for "Album of the Year" in three different decades, and yet his accolades do not end on the charts. In 1987, Simon co-founded the Children's Health Fund – a non for profit dedicated to providing free medical care to the nation's homeless and disadvantaged children – an endowment that earned Simon the United Negro College Fund's highest honor – the Frederick D. Patterson Award in recognition of his charitable work.

28 September 1999
Dharma & Greg shooting, Show no. 3ABD04, '*Play Lady Play*' (s03e04) ABC TV Studios, New York City, New York

Source: *Circulating tape*

Broadcast on 12 October 1999 The band is: Dharma Freedom Finkelstein Montgomery (Jenna Elfman), Bob (Bob Dylan), T-Bone Burnett, John Field, Tony Gilkyson, and Joe Henry.

Jenna Elfman = JE
Bob Dylan = BD

JE: One, two, three, four… [*Dharma drums*] All right, fine, you count it in.
BD: I count it in… One, two, one, two, three… [*Dylan & band play* instrumental#1] **Yeah!**
JE: Cool!… [*pause*] OK, Bob, d'ya want to see anything else?
BD: Umm… marengo… [*Dharma sighs helplessly*] **umm, polka?**
JE: Mmm, okay, let me see you play polka, I'll see if I… [*Dylan & band play a polka, Dharma joins in drumming*] That's kind of too funky for your style, right?
BD: Not at all! [*Dylan & band play* People Get Ready *instrumental*] **Umgh…** [*Dharma drums solo*]
JE: So, can I play with you, guys? Do I get the job?
BD: Well… we don't know yet.
JE: Do you want me to play some more so you can decide?
BD: Ah, no.
JE: Oh… I got a van.
BD: You got a van?
JE: Yeah, actually can you guys help me load up my stuff?
BD: Huh… [*Dylan laughs*] **ah, sure.**
JE: Cool! OK…

23 February 2000
42nd Grammy Awards Ceremony,
The Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Source: *Circulating tape*

Bob Dylan (BD) reads out the Album of the Year nominee list with Lauryn Hill (LH) of The Fugees fame. The celebration was hosted by Rosie O'Donnell (RO).

RO: For our last award we've got two *amazing* presenters. Two previous Album of the Year winners themselves. The amazing Lauryn Hill and Bob Dylan!

BD: So, this is the final Album of the Evening for the Grammy for the Album of the Year.
LH: [laughs] This year's nominees include some very diverse genres of music including country, pop, R&B, jazz, and rock.
BD: For the Album of the Year the nominations are: *Millennium* – Backstreet Boys… *Fly* – Dixie Chicks… *When I Look in Your Eyes* – Diana Krall… *Supernatural* – Santana… heh! [points his finger at Santana] ***Fanmail* – TLC… all right.**
LH: And… the Grammy goes to… wait a minute… oh!... *Supernatural* – Santana.

14 May 2000
Bob Dylan's comments on Eurovision song contest, Stockholm, Sweden

source: *Internet* & official *Brainstorm* website

BRAINSTORM BIOGRAPHY

It was May 2000. Bob Dylan was touring Sweden and being bored between shows watched telly in his hotel. "*Eurovision*" song contest's (held previous day at Stockholm) review was on. God only knows what his Bobness was thinking seeing all this. But then came a moment, when Bob got really excited. **"Yeah, this guy definitely has it!"** he growled. **"What the hell he is doing in a place like that?"** The guy was Reynard Cowper, spaghetti legged singer of Latvian group "BrainStorm", christened as 'the best (and most un-typical) "Eurovision" band ever by late "Select" magazine. And honestly, Dylan was just more or less repeating what Mike Stipe of R.E.M. have said after hearing their album "*Among The Suns*": "Their songwriting is really strong". After all – Dylan and Stipe are two men who know...

December 2000
Bob Dylan on Dion

Source: *TWM* 1620(4651), *ISIS* #95, Feb-Mar 2001, p.11.

Bob Dylan contributed the following piece to the Dion album, *King of the New York Streets*.

BOB DYLAN ON DION DIMUCCI

The voice of Dion came exploding out of what Allen Ginsberg called "hydrogen jukebox" in the fifties — the hush hush age. Torn right from the start, he had it magically together in the mythic sense — level-headed trustworthy, rhythmically there's no mayhem — just a sense of wonder, in his voice he tells the untold story in the seemingly secret language. How else do you explain the soulfulness of "Teenager In Love"? An unknowing ear would say it's a song about youthful claptrap but it's not, not any more than Tampa Red's "Let me play with your Poodle" is not about dogs. You can hear it in his haunted voice — street corner hokum sure but also barrelhouse blues, the honky-tonk world — even the most sophisticated crooner in the most articulate way — it's all there to put a spell on you. I saw Dion way back there when he followed Ritchie Valens and preceded Link Wray and the Ray Men. Richie could pitch you over the fence and Link made you feel like you wanted to take a grotesque despotic world and hang it with barbed wire, but Dion was no less brilliant — his level was cool-headed, made you feel longing, excited and entranced. "Ruby Baby" is severe, round the clock — listen you'll see. Satire, cunning, fidelity, it's all there in spades. Great singers pass us by like a parade of nobility. There's just something about them that rises above superficial culture. Dion comes from a time when so-so singers couldn't cut it — they either never got heard or got exposed quick and got out of the way. To have it you really had to have it, no smoke and mirrors then — not a minute to spare — rough and ready — glorious and grand — grieving with heartache and feeling too much but still with the always "better not try it" attitude. If you want to hear a great singer, listen to Dion. His voice takes its color from all palettes — he's never lost it — his genius has never deserted him.

January 2001
Bob Dylan on Don Ienner

Source: *Los Angeles Times* quoted in *TWM* 1635(4692) 28 Feb 2001

BOB DYLAN ON DON IENNER

On 29 January 2001, the Los Angeles Times ran an article entitled "*Passion for music drives Columbia chief to make plenty of industry noise*". It was written by Chuck Philips and concerned Don Ienner, the Chairman of Columbia Records, described as "*the No. 1 label in the music business*". The main part of the article was an interview with Ienner himself, who "*over the last decade... has transformed Sony's Columbia division from a washed-up pop monolith into a muscular hit-making machine*".

Early on, the article says, Dylan calls Ienner an "**unstoppable force**" and goes on as follows: **"As far as music goes, his love for it is unquestionably genuine. The true-to-life music, whether it's the kind that's bloody and unprocessed or even highbrow, the height of sophistication,"** Dylan said last week. **"Donny gets it all. He gets the whole picture."**

It isn't clear how Philips got the Dylan quote but, although the timing seems right, I have been assured that it wasn't at the Golden Globes award ceremony. The quote is presented almost as a single entity, apart from those first two words, isolated from the rest of their sentence. This suggests that there may have been a longer quote, from which Philips selected the extract which was printed. If anyone can shed light on this or, indeed, provide the full thing, I'd be pleased to hear from you.

In the interview with Ienner, there is a passing reference to Dylan. Ienner says, "*It used to be a cultural event when a great artist like Bob Dylan put out a new record. Not anymore. No matter how fantastic the music is, what you have to do now is create an aura around the record so it seems like an event. Take Billy Joel, for example. Even if he had a full-blown smash, you'd have to tie it to a movie in some way. You have no choice*."

Certainly, Dylan's *Things Have Changed* has benefited from its tie-in with Wonder Boys.

21 January 2001
Golden Globe Ceremony, Beverly Hilton Hotel, Los Angeles, CA

Source: *Circulating tape.*

Monica Bellucci (MB) and Phil Collins present the Golden Globe Award to Bob Dylan (BD).

MB: And the winner is… *Things Have Changed* Wonder Boys!

BD: Wow, umm… This is quite something really. Thanks, Curtis! Thanks Hollywood Foreign Press, and I thank my band, thank the record company and everybody in my family and… umm… that's about it, really! [laughter followed by a round of applause]

February 2001
Bob Dylan on his appearance at the Oscar Gala

Source: *USA Today* quoted in *TWM* 1638(4701) 11 March 2001

OSCAR BECKONS

Details of this year's Oscar nominations were given in 4676. As far as I can gather, it is common that several, if not all, of the songs nominated are performed in the course of the Oscar ceremony, which takes place on 25 March, this year. The Academy (in the shape of the Oscars' producer, Gil Gates) has invited Dylan to perform *Things Have Changed* but Dylan will be in Sydney, Australia. Someone even suggested that Dylan might rearrange some of the Australian tour dates to accommodate the Oscars ceremony, though I suspect that was nothing more than speculation.

USA Today reported that, a week ago today, Dylan had said that he hopes to participate by way of a telecast. However, Dylan's words took the form of a statement:

It's quite an honor to be nominated and, if circumstances permitted, I'd no doubt be there. We'll be touring in Australia at that time, however, and it would mean canceling shows that had been planned some time ago. So, while it's impossible for me to appear on the Academy Awards in person, I'd be thrilled to perform live via satellite, if that could be arranged. That way, I wouldn't be disappointing my fans in Australia and I'd still be able to accept the Academy's gracious offer. I really hope it all works out.

Whatever else, those do not sound like Dylan's own words. Indeed, a phrase like "gracious offer" has a Japanese ring to it. *USA Today* makes reference to the 18-hour time difference between Sydney and Los Angeles. On this basis, I calculate that an evening event in Los Angeles on 25 March would take place around the middle of the day on 26 March in Sydney. Given that there is a three-day gap between the Sydney show on 25 March and the Cairns show on 28 March, perhaps Dylan will leave his equipment set up, have a good night's sleep, do the Oscars' insert live by satellite and still get to the next show. We shall see.

19 March 2001
Bob Dylan’s comments on the Australian tour, Adelaide Airport

source: reported on r.m.d.

Some interesting comments to the waiting press as well...

Q: What have you been doing in Australia?
BD: Playing shows.
Q: What are you looking forward to doing in Australia?
BD: Play.
Q: What are your plans for Adelaide?
BD: Play and leave.

In a further response to a question that many of his fans were disappointed in 1998 on his previous visit to Adelaide, because he didn’t play enough ‘hits’, he responded:

BD: Casual fans might not know what to expect from the show, but hard fans won’t get any surprises. They know what I’m going to be playing.

25 March 2001
Amanda Meade interview, Channel 9 Studios, Sydney, Australia

source: *The Australian* newspaper, Tuesday, 27 March 2001 & r.m.d.

IN THE WRONG TOWN, SHOULD BE IN HOLLYWOOD

Bob Dylan sang his Oscar award-winning song '*Things Have Changed*', tucked away in Channel Nine studios in Sydney.

His minders, armed with mobile phones and security guards, tried their best to stop him talking to Sydney journalists, fresh from hearing his song had taken out the top honour.

Behind the scenes, acclaimed Nine television producer Peter Faiman mustered the biggest set of musical equipment he had seen, all flown in for Dylan's live cross to Hollywood.

Insiders say Dylan made last-minute changes to his set, always the artist.

Fleeting between his Nine dressing-room and his especially fitted out trailer, Dylan told 'The Australian' he was thrilled to win the award.

"It is extremely surreal and I would have liked to have been there, but there was no way I could make that happen," he said.

When asked about winning an Academy Award, Dylan said: **"It's quite something, isn't it? There's not a whole lot of people who have them."**

- Amanda Meade

25 March 2001
73rd Academy Awards Ceremony, Channel 9 Studios, Sydney, Australia via satellite to Shrine Auditorium, LA, CA

Source: *Circulating tape*

Interestingly Bob Dylan decides NOT to sing the *Hollywood* stanza! Here's the version Dylan sang that night:

I'm a worried man, got a worried mind
Nothing in front of me, no one behind
There's a woman on my lap and she's drinking champagne
Got white skin, got assassin's eyes
I'm staring up into the sapphire-tinted skies
I'm well dressed, waiting on the last train

Standing on the gallows with my head in a noose
Any minute now I'm expecting all hell to break loose

People are crazy and times are strange
I'm locked in tight, I'm out of range
I used to care, but things have changed

[This place ain't doing me any good
I'M IN THE WRONG TOWN, I SHOULD BE IN HOLLYWOOD
Just for a second there I thought I saw something move
Gonna take dancing lessons do the jitterbug rag
Ain't no shortcuts, gonna dress in drag
Only a fool in here would think he's got anything to prove

Lot of water under the bridge, Lot of other stuff too
Don't get up gentlemen, I'm only passing through]

I've been walking forty miles of bad road
If the bible is right, the world will explode
I'm trying to get as far away from myself as I can
Some things are too hot to touch
The human mind can only stand so much
You can't win with a losing hand

Feel like falling in love with the first woman I meet
Putting her in a wheelbarrow, wheeling her down the street

People are crazy and times are strange
I'm locked in tight, I'm out of range
I used to care, but things have changed

I hurt easy, I just don't show it
You can hurt someone and not even know it
Next sixty seconds could be like an eternity
Gonna get low down, gonna fly high
All the truth in the world add up to one big lie
I'm in love with a woman that don't even appeal to me

Mr. Jinx and Miss Lucy, they jumped in the lake
I'm not that eager to make a mistake

People are crazy and times are strange
I'm locked in tight, I'm out of range
I used to care, but things have changed

Bob Dylan's acceptance speech:

Oh, good God, this is amazing. I've got to thank Curtis Hanson for encouraging me to do this song and everybody at Paramount, Sherry Lansing and Jonathan Dolgen. But especially Curtis, who just kept at it. And he said this song was right and just encouraged me to do it so much and I'm so glad I did. Everybody at Columbia Records, my record company, who supports me all through these years, Tommy Mottola, Donny Ienner, Larry Jenkins, Will Botwin, John Igracias, everybody like that up here. I want to say hello to all of my family and friends out there watching.

And I want to thank the members of the Academy who were bold enough to give me this award for this song, which obviously… a song that doesn't pussyfoot around nor turn a blind eye to human nature. And God bless you all with peace, tranquility, and good will.

Thanks.

23 May 2001
World Wildlife Fund press release re: *Shelter from the Storm*

Source: *Internet*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE MAY 23, 2001 8:01 PM
CONTACT: World Wildlife Fund
Jo Lynn Dorrance 202-778-9672
jolynn.dorrance@wwfus.org

BOB DYLAN CELEBRATES BIRTHDAY WITH GIFT TO ANIMALS

WASHINGTON – May 23 – As he turns 60, Bob Dylan is paying back a 30-year-old debt he says he owes to his first fans — animals.

Dylan, who is 60 on Thursday, has given one of his classic songs, "*Shelter from the Storm*," to World Wildlife Fund for use in a new public service announcement. It is the first time, in his long and distinguished career as one of America's most influential singer-songwriters, that Dylan has allowed his words and music to be used for charitable purposes.

"Its nice to know something I did a long time ago can help save animals today," the singer said. **"WWF is a good cause, I support them, and am proud to lend my music to this effort. Early on, animals were the only ones who liked my music. Now it's pay back time."**

"*Shelter from the Storm*" is being used as the soundtrack for two WWF public service ads that make the point that wild animals and their habitats need shelter from man-made environmental storms. The TV spots are narrated by actor Donald Sutherland.

"All of us at WWF are extremely grateful to Bob Dylan for his support," said Ginette Hemley, WWF's vice president for species conservation. "As human-induced pressures on natural habitats increase, the challenge of saving endangered species becomes more difficult by the day. Mr. Dylan's gift of song will help us meet that challenge by making more Americans aware of the issues and what they can do to help."

The 60 and 30-second spots, produced by the PlowShare Group of Stamford, Ct., are being released this week to networks and TV stations across the country.

"If a song can help save an animal, I'm glad it's my song," Dylan said. **"If I can give something back and it can do some good to speak for those animals who can't speak for themselves, Amen."**

PlowShare Group works exclusively with non-profit organizations to harness the power of communications for social good.

June 2001
"Love And Theft" Press Release

Love And Theft

Love And Theft is the first studio album from BOB DYLAN since 1997's Grammy Award-winning Album Of The Year *Time Out Of Mind*. The album features 12 brand-new BOB DYLAN compositions recorded this Spring with BOB DYLAN's touring band, augmented with other musicians including legendary Texas keyboard player Augie Myers.

Edna Gundersen of *USA Today* writes "Dylan's 43rd album exudes the breezy confidence of a veteran and the adventurous energy of a budding prodigy... *Love And Theft* finds pop's inscrutable iconoclast breaking new ground while simultaneously mining gloried traditions in American song".

Los Angeles Times pop music critic Robert Hilburn describes the album as "filled with an energy and imagination of its own: almost as if he wanted to revisit some of the classic pop, folk and rock musical textures he heard on the radio as a youngster in Minnesota".

Dylan himself has said of *Love And Theft* **"All the songs are variations on the 12-bar theme and blues-based melodies. The music here is an electronic grid, the lyrics being the sub-structure that holds it all together. The songs themselves don't have any genetic history. Is it like *Time Out Of Mind*, or *Oh Mercy*, or *Blood On The Tracks*, or whatever? Probably not. I think of it more as a greatest hits album, Volume 1 or Volume 2. Without the hits; not yet, anyway"**.

The release of Love and Theft marks another milestone in the career of one of the world's most extraordinary artists, and comes amidst one of BOB DYLAN's most creative and prolific periods. In only four years since the release of the platinum *Time Out Of Mind*, BOB DYLAN has performed nearly 450 concerts around the world. He also wrote and recorded "*Things Have Changed*", featured in the film *Wonder Boys*, for which he received both the Academy Award and Golden Globe earlier this year.

23 July 2001
Press Conference (British coverage – *The Times Magazine*)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

Source:
United Kingdom, The Times Magazine, 8 Sept 2001
Interviewer: ALAN JACKSON

DYLAN ON SONG

As Bob Dylan releases another classic, the connoisseurs are poised to deconstruct every syllable — and that, says the disgruntled singer, is just sad.

He skirts the Spanish Steps in the company of bodyguards, two gentlemen of brick-outhouse proportions. The narrow streets here are choked with young and pretty tourists, girls and boys made drowsy by travel and the midday sun. They pay little heed to the slight figure who is now being steered through and around them. But the realisation does come, five or so seconds after he and his protectors have passed the crowd by. Over one after another tanned, collegiate faces realisation washes like a wave: 'Man, isn't that – wasn't that – Bob Dylan?' Too late. The icon in a cowboy hat has gone.

It is almost four years now since I last met him. Then, aged 56 he was on medication and in slow recovery from pericarditis. Swelling of the sac around the heart caused by a rare fungal infection. Though well enough to tour again by that point, it was clear that the experience had rocked and marked him. How could it not have done? At times, he had been so weak and wracked with pain that he felt sure he must be dying. Now, fully restored to health and welcoming me into this fussy, old-fashioned hotel suite, he looks younger, brighter, a different man. He is talking like a different man, too.

The Dylan of that previous encounter seemed genuinely bowled over by my enthusiasm for an about-to-be-released album. **"I'm so glad you like it,"** he insisted. **"In fact, I'm very overwhelmed. I'm used to my records being slagged off and my shows misrepresented... and you do get used to it.**

"You have to. The acceptance of a record? I think it would take a while to get used to that again. So, thank you." Coming from arguably the greatest noncollabortive songwriter of the 20th century, this low level of expectation for his output seemed extraordinary. Depressing, actually. And unjust. But happily, my enthusiasm for *Time Out of Mind* was to be shared by many others.

Just over a week later, the LP debuted in the top ten of both the British and US charts. *Best Of...* and *Greatest Hits* collections aside, it would become his best-selling release in two decades (1.8 million units to date), and certainly his most award-garlanded: three Grammies at the 1998 ceremony, including that for Album of the Year. Yet, **"not especially gratifying"**, he shrugs off the latter now, **"because, let's face it, you can win 'em in so many different categories"**. Yes, perhaps (Best Bluegrass, Best Polka even), but Album of the Year... surely you have to take pleasure when your creative peers judge a piece of work to be that? **"It's nice, I suppose,"** he allows, grudgingly. **"But, once you've finished a record, the fact that someone wants to call it this or that is neither here nor there to my way of thinking."**

Curmudgeonly? Newly ungracious? Afflicted with a short and selective memory?

Just as I was about to tick a disappointing trio of boxes on some mental checklist, Dylan's face is lit up by a grin and he volunteers the fact mat winning an Oscar last year for *Things Have Changed*, theme to the Curtis Hanson-directed *Wonder Boys*, really did strike him as special. **"A lot of performers have won Grammies. Thousands. But very few have won Academy Awards, so that puts me on a different plateau."** He shrugs, and searches for the

name of another such victor: **"I can only think of Springsteen** [for *Streets of Philadelphia*, from the film *Philadelphia*]**."** Too quickly, and more brightly than intended, I supply the name of Carly Simon (for *Let the River Run*, from *Working Girl*). A tightening of the mouth, followed by, **"I didn't know that. Yes. Well, anyway, there have been very, very few. The fact is that they're simply not that generous with them. And if I hadn't won** [an ironic roll of the eyes now] **part of me would probably have been just devastated!"** He wants me to believe that he is joking, but I find myself reluctant to do so. Because we had all thought Bob Dylan's glory days to be long gone, and then he went and proved us wrong.

Somewhere inside he has got to be delighted, possibly even a little surprised. Back on me eve of this unanticipated critical and commercial renaissance, I had broached that very issue. Rather than take offence, he had merely repeated my question (**"Has it been disabling creatively to have people say my best work is behind me?"**) before answering flatly: **"Not really, because for the most part I felt — feel – that way myself."**

Not so. *Love and Theft*, a brand-new album and the 43rd of his career, is released on Monday. And the happy news is that, although very different, it is better yet man *Time Out of Mind*. Moreover, in terms of invention and consistency, it bears comparison with anything he wrote and recorded 30 or more years ago. But before we turn to any discussion of this latest work, there is another important event to remind ourselves of. On May 24 this year, Dylan turned 60.

Across the world, and as a result of his usual reclusiveness and non-availability, the grown-up media leapt into profiling mode. Obituary mode, almost. His role as voice of a generation; his significance within the pantheon of our popular culture... **"I know! What was all of that about?"** Respect and affection, generally, I'd wager. And as such, was it gratifying for him? There is no response. Amusing, then? **"I can't remember. It feels like several years ago."** At least, I suggest, it must have reassured him as to what the consensual assessment of his contribution will be on that day, hopefully far off into the future, when he does depart this world. Dylan smiles and says nothing, so I try again. Is he confident of what his place in history will be judged to be? **"Oh, absolutely, absolutely,"** he says. **"There's no doubt in my mind."** So how did he celebrate his birthday? **"I blew out the candles, ate some cake, and went to bed."** Please? **"I had a bunch of family around and that was about it. I'm not that big on birthdays. It's kind of a pagan holiday, after all."**

This blocking of all non-musical discussion is very much a feature of the man. We know, because it is recorded fact, that Dylan has four now-adult children – Jesse, Anna, Samuel and Jakob, lead singer with the acclaimed rock band the Wallflowers – from a 12-year marriage, dissolved in 1977, to Sara Lowndes. We are not allowed to know if he has a current partner or, if so, who that might be. And even the gentlest inquiry about what are believed to be his recreational pursuits – golf, gym work-outs and, it is whispered, a little light boxing – is treated as an impertinence, if not an actual intrusion. This leaves us with his music, consideration of which has become the life's work of a legion of critics, biographers and professional fans.

In his cheerful but decidedly combative mood of today, they are not spared: **"These so-called connoisseurs of Bob Dylan music... I don't feel they know a thing, or have any inkling of who I am and what I'm about. I know they think they do, and yet it's ludicrous, it's humorous, and sad. That such people have spent so much of their time thinking about who? Me? Get a life, please. It's not something any one person should do about another. You're not serving your own life well. You're wasting your life."**

In the light of this statement, it becomes easier to understand why external validation should mean so little to him. Basically, he reckons that we all get it wrong. For example, where the so-lauded *Time Out of Mind* is concerned. **"My recollection of that record is that it was a struggle. A struggle every inch of the way. Ask Daniel Lanois, who was trying to produce the songs. Ask anyone involved in it. They all would say the same. I didn't trust the touring band I had at the time to do a good job in the studio, and so I hired these outside guys. But with me not knowing them, and them not knowing the music, things kept on taking unexpected turns.**

Repeatedly, I'd find myself compromising on this to get to mat. As a result, though it held together as a collection of songs, that album sounds to me a little off.

"There's a sense of some wheels going this way, some wheels going that, but hey, we're just about getting there." This of the album which restored him to multimillion-selling status, and which won him those three Grammies.

"But that's my truthful memory of it, and that memory overshadows any gratification about its acceptance."

So let's not even begin to imagine he will be anything other than irritated that its downbeat, world-weary lyrics were interpreted as being inspired by an increased awareness of his own impermanence (this despite the fact mat they were completed before ever he became sick).

"Where?" he demands. **"Show me? I don't see it like mat. But again, that's the story of my life.**

"From *The Times They are a-Changin'* onwards, people have misconstrued my words. They've attached the wrong meanings to mem. That's the status quo. That's what happens, and there's nothing to be done about it."

Again, not so. Because, if he chose to, he could put the Dylanophiles right.

"Our function is not to explain. If it's not too bold, I consider myself to be an innovator, one of very few around. And as such, it's certainly not for me to account for what I'm doing. I leave that to others. Hopefully, there are one or two out there who have the knowledge and the insight to make fair comment. Beyond that, what can I say?"

Well, for instance, he could tell us if the experience of illness and subsequent recovery of full health actually has had any effect on his belief system at all. **"I don't know,"** is the reply. **"As you're aware, I was on medication for a good long while afterwards. But I was able to cut down gradually and, one day, stop taking it. And at some point during that process – it's hard to say exactly when or where – the sickness faded away. I drew no profound conclusions from it at all."**

Love and Theft is what he wants to talk about. This time, no outside producer was involved. **"Because I didn't feel any additional help was necessary. Not that I want to take credit or draw attention to myself. I don't want to get flooded with calls from other people, asking me to pilot their records. Heh-heh-heh! It's not like I'm in need of the work!"**

Playing it through is like turning the dials on some ancient crystal wireless set. Though the sound is crisp and new, the musical inspiration feels to be as old as time. And most striking of all in this era of composition-by-numbers, of hooks and choruses and samples, is the fact mat all 12 tracks are narrative in structure and essence. They are a reminder of what songwriting used to be for and about – the simple telling of a story.

Dylan nods, looking pleased at this suggestion: **"Exactly so!"**

In this, the album will be an anomaly within the current marketplace. For another reason, it is unusual even within the context of his own back catalogue. Among its tracks is *Mississippi*, written and recorded for the *Time Out of Mind* project, but not included in the final line-up (Sheryl Crow later covered it on her 1998 release, *The Globe Sessions*). Subsequently Dylan has cut a new, definitive version — the first time he has ever re-recorded one of his own unreleased songs. Or has been of a mind to. **"With all of my records, there's an abundance of material left over – stuff that, for a variety of reasons, doesn't make the final cut. And other people seem to think they have some kind of right to it. That it's their property, even, which is baffling to me. I mean, you don't drive a car out of the showroom without paying for it, do you? You don't leave the supermarket without passing through the check-out with your goods. It's called stealing. Why the principle should be thought to be any different when it comes to music, I really don't know."**

He is referring to the hosts of bootleg recordings that have found their way into the public domain across the years. **"And have been bought up by so-called hardcore fans of mine** [a sneering tone here]**, whoever they might be — those folks out there who are obsessed with finding every scrap of paper I've ever written on, every single outtake. All right, that's the**

world we live in. I accept it's just the way things are. But the fact is that I can no longer be interested in it [material 'released' without his consent in this way]**. It's already been contaminated for me. I turn my back, move on to something else. This time though** [and as a result of the stricter controls he is now exerting over his own recordings]**, my original wasn't floating around out there, and I felt able to go back and revisit it. I'm glad for once to have had the opportunity to do so."**

It is hard to believe that *Love and Theft* will do anything other than continue this process of Dylan's critical and commercial rehabilitation.

Meanwhile, and independent of this, his work diary remains fully booked for the remainder of 2001, and there seems no prospect of a let-up in the number of live dates — habitually between 100 and 150 – to which he and his band commit themselves each year. **"Come January, we'll just look at a map of the world and decide where it is we want to go and what it is we want to do there."**

With this in mind, I mention a recent comment to me by the blues guitarist Buddy Guy: **"Musicians don't retire, son. They just drop."** A brief smile is the response. **"Well, I've no plans myself right now to draw any line within the sand. What's more likely is some day I'll just wake up and decide that I have had enough. And if and when that happens, I won't have any problem with walking away. I've fulfilled every single thing I wanted to do. I feel like there is nothing left for me to prove."**

He has no plans, he tells me shortly, for writing his autobiography. Because all he wants the world to know about his life is contained within the songs, perhaps? This remark provokes a narrowing of the eyes, and then the following statement: **"I don't even consider this work as part of my life. Not even close. My life doesn't revolve around my work. Not even a little bit. I mean, I've got millions of fans and I know that and I'm more than happy to go out there and play for them... But that's not my life. My life is private and personal and completely filled up."** With which Bob Dylan stands, pats my shoulder and gives a conspiratorial wink. Seconds later, he is gone.

Love and Theft *is released by Columbia on Monday.*

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Press Conference (Irish coverage – *The Irish Times Magazine*)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

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BOB DYLAN COMES CLEAN
in an interview with Dave Fanning

On a glorious summer's afternoon in a small room in the Hotel de la Ville, on the Via Sistina just off the Spanish Steps in Rome, Bob Dylan breezes in almost excitedly, less a bundle nerves, tics and mannerisms than a man slightly uneasy about this whole interview lark. Like most stars, he's smaller in the flesh than in your mind. His dress, black, is casual, sloppy even; grey hair tumbles from beneath a black cowboy hat, This close, he seems much healthier than the embalmed Vincent Price look he projects from the concert stage. For over an hour he sits upright in an occasionally twitchy kind of way at the edge of his seat.

One of the reasons why Bob Dylan doesn't talk to the press is probably because an awful lot of people think that he's got an awful lot to say. He'd be the first to admit that he doesn't, despite the fact that he's lumbered with that "spokesman for a generation" tag which for millions of people means that his music can singlehandedly sum up growing up in the 1960s. Despite 20 or 30 unauthorised biographies, the truth is still out there and Dylan does have plans to tell it, however oblique the end result may be. Up until now he'd have preferred that you gathered together some recent quotes and leave it at that. Here's a few:

"I think words like 'icon' and 'legend' are just other terms for the guys of the day before yesterday, who nobody wants to know these days. You can influence all kinds of people but sometimes it gets in the way..."

"[Today's audiences] **react immediately to what I do and they don't come with a lot of preconceived ideas of what they'd like me to do or who they think I am. Indeed, we seem to be attracting a new audience, not just those who know me as some kind of figurehead from a different age. I don't really have to deal with that anymore..."**

"The stage is the only place where I'm happy. It's the only place you can be what you want to be. When you're up there and you look at the audience and they look back then you have the feeling of being in a burlesque. But there's a certain part of you that becomes addicted to a live audience. I do about 25 shows a year, which may sound a lot to people who don't work that much, but it isn't. Someone like BB King is working 350 nights a year."

You get the impression that, in his own way, Dylan is as relaxed and buoyant as he is on his new and 43rd album, *Love and Theft* — good qualities for a conversation but not necessarily for an album. With a bluesy take on a bunch of songs not hugely dissimilar in sound and construction to those on his 30-year-old *Nashville Skyline,* he's now having a good time with country blues-type ballads. We got some hints of this at that glorious, intimate gig in Dublin's Vicar St last winter. But if you're a fan of Dylan's piano and harmonica workouts, there's little for you here. In amongst the rootsy 12-bar-blues and Appalachian croons you'll find a hymn *(Sugar Baby),* western swing *(Summer Days),* and hard rock *(Honest with Me).* The standout is *Highwater,* an acoustic country blues number driven by dobro, banjo and acoustic guitar.

Dylan describes *Love and Theft* as **"a greatest hits album without the hits"**. **"Well, we're gonna have to wait and see about this particular album,"** he states, confidently. **"It just might be a landmark album. I mean, we never know these things until much later than the event itself, even though it might be an invisible event we're talking about. You're gonna have to listen a whole lot more."** He adds, wryly, **"Like you do those early albums."**

Ah, yes, the early albums. Firstly, there's the folk collection, whose significance we often unfairly judge only in terms of how it shaped his mid-1960s rock output. Secondly, there

is that output which, in a 14-month period, yielded *Bringing It All Back Home, Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*. Boasting multiple styles and moods, flowering wordplay, vitriol, humour and themes which range from the intimate to the political, these are records which fulfil you intellectually, musically and politically.

On stage, these songs change beyond recognition. **"My records are underdeveloped from day one,"** Dylan says. **"Basically I sing a song. I strum around on the guitar. In recorded technology, that's called making demos. It's no accident that other singers have had better hits with my songs than I have. That's no accident, because they've sensed there's a structure to them, and there is. I've never been allowed to develop that, working with slipshod producers or fakes or a bunch of nonentities.**

"And so be it! I was still willing to allow that to happen and I could go onstage and rectify it. So what I'm saying is that songs need structure, stratagems, codes and stability. And then you hang lyrics on them. I'm speaking here as someone who sings a song that's written. And when we transfer all that to the stage, that's where all that comes into play. They don't come into play on a record 'cos my cohorts at the time never really sought to develop any of that stuff and I can't do it at the time of recording 'cos the song at the time is new to me."

Warming to the theme, he adds: **"I don't listen to them** [producers] **and I never feel the songs have been perfected. I used to have a problem — I don't anymore — with working on some album where a song might have been recorded, but I didn't think it had been recorded very well or the right way or the way I hear it in my mind. Then the song as it exists gets out by people you trust. I've been asked: 'So how come your such a bad judge of your material? You don't put the best stuff on your record?' Well. I don't know who judges what the best stuff is or not but, basically, I'm not judging my material. I just don't think some of my stuff was recorded right.**

"And then once it gets out I'm not that keen on going in and re-recording it, except on this record." Here, Dylan is referring to the song *Mississippi*. **"We had that on the *Time Out of Mind* album. It wasn't recorded very well but, thank God, it never got out, so we recorded it again. But something like that would never have happened 10 years ago. You'd have probably all heard the trashy version of it and I'd have never re-recorded it."**

So does that mean you take more care? **"Well, yeah,"** he shrugs. **"But really it's that I don't trust anybody. It's that simple."**

Most Dylan fans have a favourite Dylan album which failed to reach the audience it deserved. Let's take mid-period Dylan and *Street Legal* as an example. **"Well, I don't know about *Street Legal*. There were probably other artists who were being featured in the media. The cultural landscape was a little different back then, probably. I wouldn't know. I know that I've always been with the same record company. They probably tried everything to sell it. It probably wasn't what people wanted to hear at that time."**

Bob Dylan, the private, guarded, reluctant icon is positively dismissive about his legions of religious devotees. **"What kind of religion are they?"**, he snaps, albeit good-humouredly. **"I mean, what sacrifices do they make? And to whom do they sacrifice, these hardcore religious fans? And I'd like to know when and where they make their sacrifices 'cos I'd like to be there. I don't really feel I've any hardcore fans. There are some people that do. I really just don't. We have a few people who see an abundance of my shows but we don't think of them as hardcore fans."** Probably not a great time to mention the hundreds of Dylan websites, one of which chronologically details every song he has ever played at every gig, with each set-list updated every day.

He claims to have read just one of the many biographies. **"I haven't read any really since that Bob Shelton one came out and I knew him and I don't know these other people. It's difficult reading about oneself 'cos in your own mind things don't appear that way. They didn't happen that way. It seems like you're reading about other people. It's fictitious. So, if it's gonna be fictitious, where's all the good stuff?"**

Dylan is now writing about himself — **"It'll be published in an article form, but as a book, a book of articles, because they're ongoing. That's about as much as it is at the moment."** He doesn't look too kindly on his previous literary effort, his mid-1960s "book" *Tarantula,* which, in the past, he has admitted was just a collection of thoughts and lyrics, gathered together to satisfy the public's insatiable appetite and to make money.

"That's a particular incident. Things were running wild at that point. It never was my intention to write a book. Y'see, I had a manager who said, 'Well, y'know, he writes all these songs... what else does he write?' And he might've said, 'Well, what else he got?' 'Well, does he write books?' And he might've said, 'Of course he does!' And they said, 'Well, we'd like to publish one'. I think it was one of those kind of things where he arranged the whole thing and it was up to me to write the book. It was never anything that I consciously set out to do.

"He did that on different occasions. He had me on a television show being an actor. I didn't know anything about it. Until the day I appeared, I thought I was gonna sing. These things would happen back in the early part of the... last century!"

And does it all seem a long time ago? **"Ages."**

Regarding Dylan's memoirs, a haphazard **"why not?"** seems like the best response to the "why now?" question. **"Oh, I think that with this type of writing, I was just trying to find the right way to get into it, rather than making it some kind of self-serving story of my particular past. If it seems to happen that way, it's actually dissimilar in a lot of ways. I can do it because I'm a famous person so I use that fame because a lot of the things I might write about, other people know about anyway. So with a person like myself, the process of doing it this way works.**

"I mean, I'm not really making a real attempt to do this. I just do it in my spare time."

Throughout the decades, Dylan has successfully managed to avoid talking too much about himself. Reflecting on the difficult phases, he takes a long pause and eventually offers: **"There've been a lot of tricky parts where you have to assume another character in order to... em, survive. Basically you have to surrender your ambitions at a certain point in order to get where you need to be."** But what kinds of ambition did you ever surrender? **"That's what you're going to have to find out."**

Dylan tours constantly, to the point where you feel he's probably happier in the tour bus than in any one of his 17 homes. **"Well, the tour buses are becoming pretty luxurious,"** he half deadpans. **"As far as 'happy' goes, as far as 'happy in a home' goes, I can't say I don't feel at home livin' most anywhere. I mean, I feel at home at home and when I'm not there, it's not like I'm longing for anything that's not presently where I'm at."** And is it easier to be Bob Dylan today than it used to be? **"I'm not the one to ask. That's a philosophical question."**

If, as he maintains, his approach to his autobiographical musings is to use his songs as springboards, has this forced him to revisit the old albums for — if legend is to be believed — the first time since they were released? And does he allow himself a "God, I was good"-type reaction? **"Well, I'm only looking at it from an angle that maybe it has never occurred to me before to look at it. A lot of the things that happen to us, we just seem to go through without ever wondering if there's a purpose to go from this to that. It's often a case of one of those questions: 'Could this have happened if that didn't happen and if this maybe felt so bad at the time, why did it maybe lead to something very beneficial in the long run?' It's written from a variety of angles, really, and it interests me to write it but I'm not painstakingly doing it."**

One of the more recent unauthorised Dylan biographies points to the fact that, unlike so many of the other big names of the 20th century, Bob Dylan's best work is not limited to a single period. He's a guru to millions who hear their deepest thoughts and feelings expressed in his songs, an artist who is perceived to be an original thinker, whose work encapsulates wisdom. Dylan's lyrics have become figures of speech. His quips, and there are many, are included in compendiums of modern quotations. This makes Dylan an unusual entertainer. However great Elvis was, few would consider him a source of wit and wisdom. In his youth as a folksinger, Dylan was closely associated with movements for social change, an icon of the early Sixties alongside John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King. In the mid-Sixties he rebelled against

categorisation by setting his poetic lyrics to the sound of amplified rock 'n' roll. In his maturity he has written eloquently of love, faith, marriage, parenthood and ageing. In the summer of 1966, Dylan was injured when he fell off his motorbike. Allegedly, that is. Maybe it was just the most convenient way to avoid the treadmill for a few years.

"It's difficult for me to pinpoint anytime where I made any conscious decision to do this or that," he says, **"but obviously with that particular time, I just didn't feel like going out to play. I didn't feel like I was part of that culture."** Ironically, while Dylan was completely absent from the Summer of Love and the hippie "culture" in general, his silence caused his mystique to grow, thus allowing Dylanologists of varying degrees of credulity and sanity to flourish.

Although he reads Shakespeare and the Bible, he doesn't study poetry anymore and he's not turned on by new writers. **"I just don't really think there are any,"** he asserts, **"because we live in a different time. The media is all-pervasive. What can a writer think of to write that you don't see every day in a newspaper or on television?"** Well, there are emotions to be expressed. **"The media is moving people's emotions anyway. When Rimbaud was writing, William Blake or Shelley or Byron or any of those people, there probably wasn't any media, just somewhere where you could feel free to put down anything that came into your mind."**

But don't you feel free when you're writing? **"Well, like I say, I don't particularly sit down and write. My lines go into songs and they have a certain structure, they have to conform to a certain idiom. They're not free-form and there's no point trying to throw in some ideological idea. You can't do it in a song."** But you've done it. **"I've done it? If I did, I did it *de facto* but I've never intentionally started out with that in mind. I mean I never have. Maybe some others have, but I haven't."**

So it's safe to make the assumption that TV and the media in general have killed poetry and literature. **"Absolutely. Absolutely. Even literature is written for an audience. It's not just written, it doesn't sit down. Everybody's not Kafka, sitting down and writing something that should never be seen by... that you don't want some analyst to see. Most people who sit down, they want people to see it. They want people to read it. They want a person's reaction. They want some type of acceptance. But the media is doing that for everybody now. And movies and TV. I mean, you can't see more horrific things than you see in the media, especially in the news. I'm just talking about the news department, which is showing people absolutely everything they'd ever even dreamed about. Even thoughts they might think and suppress forever, they'd see them in the media. So you can't express them anymore.**

"What's a writer to do if every idea is exposed in the media before he can get to it or let it evolve? What's a writer gonna write about?"

Firing on all cylinders, Dylan adds: **"It's a science-fiction world. We're living in a science-fiction world. We're living in a world that Disney has conquered. Disney's science fiction. Theme parks, trendy streets, it's all science fiction. So I'd say that if a writer has something to say, he'll have to do it within that science-fiction world. Whether we realise it or not, science fiction has become the real world."**

Despite the feeling that Bob Dylan is not so much a man out of time as a man a little out of step, his new album, *Love and Theft,* has been rapturously received. Even Columbia, his record company, appears willing to give it the big push. Recently, over Malibu's various beaches, I watched a light plane circling the sunbathers and surfboarders with a giant streamer flapping in its wake. It read: BOB DYLAN: LOVE AND THEFT. They'd never have done that for *Street Legal.* There's even a first-time-ever TV commercial! The result? It's gone 'top three' in the album charts.

I suppose the fact is that, great and all as his last album, *Time Out of Mind* (1997) most certainly is, it was a haunting meditation on mortality and sounded like a postcard from the cemetery. And Dylan himself underwent serious heart surgery around that time. *Time Out of Mind* nonetheless managed to win three Grammys, including Album of the Year. It's obvious

that his health scare did little to hamper his momentum and left no lasting physical or psychological scars.

Today, Dylan looks as fit as a fiddle even if on record he sounds as though his favourite breakfast is ashtrays-on-toast. But he's cracking jokes and reflecting on love, and not always in a rueful way. As often with Bob Dylan, the overall effect is loose as various tunes are tangled up in blues, country and rockabilly. The lyrics are playful and unstudied. What he's doing here is straddling the future (no, I'm not talking about techno, hip-hop, garage or trance) and the past in a radical reinvention of prewar US song styles. You get the impression that Dylan likes this album and feels that others are going to like it also. In among the rave reviews, *Rolling Stone* magazine bestowed on *Love and Theft* a perfect score of five stars, the first time in nine years it has done that for a new album (the last was REM's *Automatic for the People)*.

Tackle Dylan on his lyrics and he's got little to say. Especially anything related to his private life. Dylan's mother died last year, and on the song *Lonesome Day Blues,* he sings, "*I wish my mother was still alive*." He's been quoted as saying that **"even to talk about my mother just breaks me up".** Best leave it at that.

Bob Dylan, at 60, is a working musician, a troubadour, a song-and-dance man. The latest leg of his Never-Ending Tour kicks off in Spokane, Washington on October 5th. Dylan would be the first to admit that the only thing he knows how to do is to keep on keepin' on.

The inaugural volume of *Chronicles,* about 100 pages of recollections of Bob Dylan's early folk days in New York City, will be published by Simon and Schuster next year

23 July 2001
Press Conference (Irish coverage – *Hot Press*)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

Source: The *Hot Press* Annual issue for 2002

DF – Dave Fanning

HIGHWAY '01 REVISITED
The Fanning/Dylan outtakes

Previously unpublished extracts from Dave Fanning's recent interview with Bob Dylan in Rome during which Zimmy tried to recall a night with Bono, expresses his fear of the Internet and answers the ultimate question: Ever meet Elvis?

DF: The media celebrated your sixtieth birthday. Did you?
BD: Just in the usual way. Blew out some candles, that's about it.
DF: Did you invite friends?
BD: Yeah, mostly just family.
DF: Are you younger than that now?
BD: Sure hope so (laughs)**.**
DF: Does the level of celebration around such an event bother you or please you?
BD: No.
DF: Lately you've won a bunch of awards including Grammys and, this year, an Oscar. Feel good?
BD: Yeah, I know, I'm winnin' a lot of stuff. Kinda funny, isn't it?
DF: Are they catching up on wasted time?
BD: I think there's an element of that in it. I wouldn't know.
DF: I've heard rumours about a Nobel Prize nomination... ?
BD: Yeah, I hear about that. Who would that put me in the company of? I'm not sure.
DF: Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck...
BD: Oh Hemingway. I think all the guys who write like Hemingway write for *Time* magazine, don't they?
DF: Isn't Steinbeck an old favourite of yours?
BD: Hmmm, I'm not sure if I really belong in that category of people.
DF: Is that a question of higher or lower?
BD: It's difficult to say. It's all really pretty relative.
DF: How does the Dylan legend affect what you do?
BD: Ninety-five percent of the time, that doesn't affect my life whatsoever. The other part?... Well, we who are involved in fame, we just have to learn to deal with it any kind of way we can.
DF: Any strategy?
BD: I don't have any strategy for it. I try to be as polite as possible.
DF: Ever wonder 'why me'?
BD: Not at this point. I know what it is I've done to be famous, so...
DF: In one of your last conversations with Allen Ginsberg you said that fame had no redeeming qualities whatsoever. What would you substitute fame for?
BD: I really don't travel in the world of the rich and famous. I don't really feel I'm part of that culture in any way.
DF: Do you find it hard to find places where you're not recognised?
BD: Well, at this point I'm recognised just about everywhere. Everywhere. I don't even remember the last time I wasn't recognised.

DF: Looking back, when you first made an impact, was it a good time to be doing what you were doing?

BD: I didn't really choose to do what it is you see me doing. It chose me. If I had anything to do with it, it'd be something different... a scientist, an engineer, a doctor. Those are the people I look up to. I don't really look up to entertainers at all. They don't have any meaning for me one way or another.

DF: Do you miss much from the past? Are times good now?

BD: Oh, there must be something. I think I miss plenty but I'm not really a very nostalgic person so I don't really yearn for things like that from the past.

DF: Would you have any chance in the business now if you were a newcomer?

BD: I think so, 'cos if you have the ability and the knowledge and the strength to do it, y'know?, that's all you really need and I think I know more about what I'm doing now than I ever... I know I could find a place if that's what I wanted to do but I don't think I'd want to do it if I came on the scene now. Like I said, I'd want to do something else.

DF: Do you feel you're part of a band now?

BD: Well, I always try to have a current band, a current bunch of performers to play the music. You never know how long you can keep a band together or how a band will change from one individual to another; I mean, those things aren't foreseen but this particular group are very competent and can go a lot of different ways musically.

DF: How long do you see yourself doing this?

BD: I don't really know. I suppose until one day I might have had it. I don't know. I can't say until the crowds dwindle down but I may just one day have had enough.

DF: Ever go on the Internet?

BD: I'm afraid to go on the internet. I'm afraid some pervert's gonna lure me somewhere.

DF: Do you listen to a lot of music nowadays?

BD: Some. Not any more than I used to.

DF: New music?

BD: I don't know. Like, who's new?

DF: Eminem?

BD: I wouldn't know anything about that.

DF: On the storytelling level, could you take anything from hip hop?

BD: Beats me. Never really occurred to me to pay attention to what's going on.

DF: You championed Bono pretty early on in U2's career. Didn't you spend a long evening with him once telling him that he should examine the writers, songs and stories from his own Irish past for inspiration? Y'know, look back further than the rock and pop decades?

BD: I could have. I don't remember verbatim or a time and place but if I'm being held responsible for telling him that, I don't really know that I could deny it.

DF: Did Elvis have a strong influence on you?

BD: He did. Growing up he did.

DF: How did you feel when he recorded your song 'Tomorrow Is A Long Time'?

BD: What can you say? When someone like that records your song, I'm sure any songwriter would feel intensely gratified.

DF: Did you ever meet Elvis?

BD: Emm... (long pause)... **I never did meet him.** (Pause). **Well, that's what I'm supposed to say.** (grins).

23 July 2001
Press Conference (French coverage)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

Source: *ISIS* #99, Oct-Nov 2001, pp. 46-50.

Newspapermen Eating Candy
The Rome Press Conference

While on tour in Europe during June and July 2001, Bob Dylan gave a "mini press conference." The interview/press conference was along the lines of the interview session given around the time of the release of "*Time Out Of Mind*." This latest session, which took place on July 23, 2001, featured many of the same journalists.

There were thirteen journalists present representing twelve countries. It appears that on the day of the "mini press conference" Dylan also gave two separate one-on-one interviews. The first of these was with Christoph Daliach of the Germany paper *Der Spiegel* (Daliach was also present at the "mini press conference.") The other interview was with UK journalist, Alan Jackson for *The Times Magazine*.

The interviews took place on a glorious sunny summer's afternoon in a small room in the Hotel de la Ville, on the Via Sistina just off the Spanish Steps in Rome.

Suddenly Bob Dylan is there – he's a quarter of an hour late -he comes into the room dressed in black and white and looking like a gentleman from the Old West. The journalists are seated on a sofa; Dylan sits opposite them behind a wall of microphones and tape recorders. He sits upright on the edge of his seat and is occasionally twitchy. He has a courteous expression, but looks a little nervous; puzzled by something that's not familiar to him even after all these years in the music business. Every line on his face tells the story of a decade, but in the centre of that face, shadowed by untidy slightly greying curls that fall from beneath a white Stetson hat, there are two pale-blue eyes, frighteningly large and attentive, darting like the windows of a great mind that works unceasingly.

Here are thirteen journalists, tense, full of adrenaline and armed to their teeth with questions. To begin with, however, the anticipation becomes an anticlimax. The uneasy interviewee, answers most of the questions with – **"er, hmm, I don't know"** and he gives only the briefest of answers. However, as the session progresses Dylan begins to open up, he wants to talk about his new album and he even gets round to smiling.

Four hours before the interview, all of the invited journalists were gathered in the same luxurious hotel to listen to the new album, eat fancy sandwiches and drink sparkling wine.

The interview session itself was split into two parts. The first part, which lasted just over half an hour, was mostly nonproductive. After a fifteen-minute break, however, Dylan opened up and talked more freely for a further 50-minutes.

No tapes from this interview are in circulation and as each of the journalists wrote their own accounts, we have had to piece together the interview as presented here from various sources. The sources used here are *Rock & Folk* (France); *Der Spiegel* (Germany); *La Repubblica* (Italy); *Dagens Nytheters* (Sweden) and *The Irish Times Magazine* (Ireland). <u>The bulk of the text is taken from *Rock & Folk* (France)</u> with other quotes (hopefully) inserted in the appropriate places.

Many thanks for help with the sourcing of these interviews goes to Ian Woodward, and for their translation in to English, Jeff Stevens, Jens Winter, Marco Masimo and whoever translated from Swedish. Sorry I can't find your details at the moment!!!

Q: The album is based on the music of your childhood, western swing, rockabilly, blues, country, musical forms that you have never really explored before. Was it a desire to reconnect with your youth?

BD: No. Most songs have traditional roots, but not all of them.

Q: It's a very joyful album. The words are quite dark but the music is tinged with a kind of joy.

BD: Yes, you know, producers have often pushed the sound on the records in one direction or another, without worrying too much about my wishes. Lots of my albums have suffered from that.

Q: So, are you the producer of this album?

BD: Oh, no, no, no, I wouldn't particularly want to pin the label of producer on myself. But when you have an absolutely clear view of the arrangements you want, there is really nothing to produce.

Q: Have you recorded these songs at a particular moment in their existence in order to be able to change them when you play them live?

BD: Not entirely. The tracks were not yet complete when we went into the studio. I had a general idea in mind but not their finished form.

Q: You are singing in surprising registers. On "*Po' Boy*" particularly you reach some high notes using some amazing jazz reflections.

BD: On that particular song it was the only possible approach. It is a melody that doesn't require instruments or words. The ones I have written simply follow the melody and don't impose too much emotional rhetoric on it.

Q: (The German journalist interjects) Your voice sounds darker than ever before on this album.

BD: I don't think it's ever been recorded in a more accurate way. I don't think I was singing better than in the past.

Q: Do you think there are preconceived ideas about certain voices like yours and Leonard Cohen's and Lou Reed's?

BD: I think Leonard's voice is easily understood because his vocal range is low and straightforward (linear). Lou has his own way of singing and speaking at the same time. Recording them shouldn't be a problem.

The fact is that my voice goes up and down, low and high. It's irregular, and it subverts the classical recording systems. But I really think the right way is the most simple way. All you need is an analogic recording. On my last record, they put on all kinds of effects and overdubs afterwards, to make me sound like the way I do anyway. But on this record, we had a young engineer who knew exactly what to do. He got the point.

Q: Do you listen to your old records?

BD: I don't listen to them because I feel that some of them weren't finished properly. They're not recorded in the right way, or the way I had in mind. I've been asked: 'So how come your such a bad judge of your material?' I've been criticised for not putting my best songs on certain albums but it is because I consider that the song isn't ready yet. It's not been recorded right.

With all of my records, there's an abundance of material left off – stuff that, for a variety of reasons, doesn't make the final cut. And other people seem to think they have some kind of right to it. That it's their property even, which is baffling to me. I mean, you don't drive a car out of the showroom without paying for it, do you? You don't leave the supermarket without passing through the check-out with your goods. It's called stealing. Why the principle should be thought to be any different when it comes to music, I really don't know.

He is referring to the hosts of bootleg recordings that have found their way into the public domain across the years.

BD: They get bought up by so-called hardcore fans of mine [a sneering tone here]**, whoever they might be – those folks out there who are obsessed with finding every scrap of paper I've ever written on, every single outtake. All right, that's the world we live in. I**

accept it's just the way things are. But the fact is that I can no longer be interested in it [material 'released' without his consent].

Once it gets out, or is recorded by someone else, I'm not keen on going in and re-recording it. It's already been contaminated for me. I turn my back and move on to something else. Except on this album, for which we re-cut the song 'Mississippi.' We had that on the "Time Out Of Mind" album. It wasn't recorded very well but thank God, it never got out, so we recorded it again. But something like that would never have happen ten years ago. You'd have probably all heard the lousy version of it and I'd have never re-recorded it. I'm glad for once to have had the opportunity to do so.

Q: So does that mean you take more care?

BD: Well, yeah, he shrugs. **But really it's that I don't trust anybody. It's that simple.**

Q: Most Dylan fans have a favourite Dylan album, which failed to reach the audience it deserved. Let's take mid-period Dylan and "Street Legal" as an example.

BD: Well, I don't know about "Street Legal." There were probably other artists who were being featured in the media. The cultural landscape was a little different back then, probably. I wouldn't know. I know that I've always been with the same record company (sic)**. They probably tried everything to sell it. It probably wasn't what people wanted to hear at that time.**

My records are the bare essentials. Basically, I sing my song and strum my guitar. In recording technology that is called making demos (he is getting a bit edgy.) **It is no accident that other singers have had more success with my songs than I have. That's no accident, because they've sensed there's a proper structure to them, and there is. I've never been allowed the opportunity to develop that, because working with slipshod producers or fakes or a bunch of nonentities. I have always allowed that kind of thing to happen because I could get up on stage and rectify it. So, what I'm saying is that songs need a structure, stratagems, codes and stability. And then you hang lyrics on them. I'm speaking here as someone who sings a song that's written. When we transfer all that to the stage, that's where all those elements come into play. They don't come into play on a record 'cos my cohorts at the time never really sort to develop any of that stuff and I can't do it at the time of recording 'cos the song at the time is new to me.**

I have often been let down. All those people who thought they knew how to record me hadn't the slightest idea about what needed to be done.

Q: So do you pay more attention than before?

BD: I have always taken care with my records but now I no longer trust anyone. (laughs)

Q: You have said about this new album that it is a "greatest hits without the hits."

BD: Humm, yes. (laughter) **You are going to have to work out yourselves whether this album is the peak of my career. It may very well be. But then again maybe not.** (laughter) **But you people here, you have a responsibility to tell the people about this record, knowing that in ten years time, people will write even more. Everything you write others will comment on. Listen to it again!** (laughter)

Q: Is "Love And Theft" an album intended to conquer a new audience?

BD: Absolutely. It is not an album I've recorded to please myself. If I really wanted to do that, I would record some Charley Patton songs.

Q: Is this your vision of the blues?

BD: No, I'm using existing musical structures, 12 bar blues or Elizabethan ballads that I change or dismantle from the inside. I use them as a blueprint, as departure points.

Q: (The German cuts in) On 'Mississippi' you sing: 'I've been in trouble since I've set my suitcase down.' Is that the case for you: as soon as you put down your bag problems catch up with you?

BD: Is that the only line you can remember? (laughter) **Do you want to know what was in the suitcase?** (laughter) **Or perhaps where I left it?**

(The Dane fires a question) Is "Love And Theft" your best album?

BD: It's the most recent at any rate. (laughter)

Q: Why do you perform so many concerts?

BD: I don't feel that I do as many as that. More perhaps than some performers who only tour when they have a new record to promote. But I am sure there are musicians in Europe or in the States who play a lot more than I do.

Q: Don't you think there's a sort of religious feeling amongst your hardcore fans?

BD: And then what religion are they? [he snaps, albeit good-humouredly] **I mean what sacrifices do they make...**

Q: A lot of money, among others things.

BD: ...And to whom do they sacrifice, these hardcore fans? If they do sacrifice then okay, we've got hardcore religious fans. And I'd like to know when and where they make their sacrifices because I'd like to be there.

I really don't think I've got any hardcore fans. There are some people that do. I really just don't... I mean there are a few people that see an lot of my shows, but we don't think of them as hardcore fans.

Q: It seems like your audience is growing. Are there many young people at your concerts along with your old fans?

BD: I don't think there are many old fans. The fact is that people of my age die, or change their lives. At a certain point in your life, new problems arise. Family, children. Priorities change, entertainment becomes less important.

Q: Do you consider yourself to be an entertainer?

BD: No, but I have to face up to the world of entertainment.

Q: Do you think you'll be going to visit George Harrison?

BD: I'm in contact with him, but at the moment I haven't got the time. If I have the possibility then I will.

Q: Do you think The Traveling Wilburys could come back?

BD: Who can say? It's difficult to know.

(The Norwegian interrupts) Has your approach to concerts changed over the last few years? When you're on stage, do you have in your mind any idea of who you're relating to?

BD: Yeah, I'm playing for the people who are furthest away. I don't look at the people near me because it's usually the people who you see at every concert. They'll enjoy the concert in any case.

Q: Do the fans in the front irritate you?

BD: No, they are there. That's fine.

Q: After many years you're still on tour. Some people call it The Never Ending Tour. You wrote in the sleevenotes to "World Gone Wrong" that we shouldn't be fooled by the label 'Never Ending Tour.'

BD: Yes, that's right I think that labels trivialise things. I don't like my work to be referred to in those terms. Of course, everything has an end (a deliberate pause)**. Why talk of a neverending tour? It is bound to end. The thing that links us all, the one thing we have in common, is our mortality.**

Q: Do you think about death often?

BD: I wouldn't say often, but it certainly happens when people who are close to me die.

Q: On the new album there are at least two songs in which the narrator refers to the death of his Mother: "I wish my Mother were still alive" on 'Lonesome Day Blues' and "My Mother died" on 'Po' Boy.' Were they inspired by the death of your Mother last year?

BD: Probably, [he says slowly] **I can't understand how it couldn't be like that. Many of these songs were written in some kind of 'stream of consciousness' kind of mood, and I don't sit and linger, meditate on every line afterwards. My approach is just to let it happen and then reject the things that don't work.**

Q: And about your own mortality?

BD: Well, I can see myself in other people, that's the way you can think about it. I don't think about it any more than everybody else. As soon as you enter this world you're old enough to leave it.

Q: Do you feel more at home in your tour bus than in any of your seventeen houses?

BD: Ah, those Pullman buses are becoming pretty luxurious, you know. As far as 'happy' goes; as far as 'happy in a home' goes, I'm quite an adaptable person. And I feel at home anywhere, everywhere. I mean, I feel at home at home and when I'm not there, it's not like I'm longing for anything that's not presently where I am at.

Q: How does it feel to be Dylan today? Easier than in the past?

BD: I'm not the right person to ask. It's a philosophical question.

Q: How much longer do you see yourself carrying on?

BD: I don't really know. I can't tell you that it will be the day when there is no longer an audience because the crowds are still coming. Perhaps one day I'll get sick of it.

Q: How do you maintain your energy levels?

BD: Energy? Hum. That's all imaginary, that stuff. Just like someone who has learned how to do a job, there are strategies, stratagems, codes and techniques that can be used. Once those are in place, they can help you find energy or emotion or whatever you want to call it. But all it is, is a combination of elements that appear in some sort of combustible way.

Q: Thirty years earlier and you might have been relatively unknown but the times allowed you to be exposed to the world and to achieve a degree of notoriety and a considerable fortune. Is it a blessing for you to have reached a moment where your talent is flourishing at this present time in History?

BD: I didn't really choose to do what you see me doing. I was chosen for it. If someone had consulted me, I would have preferred to be a scientist, a doctor, or an engineer. They are the people I really admire. I don't admire people in the entertainment field.

Q: Can you explain what you mean by "I was chosen."

BD: Humm, it's like I just said. I didn't have any choice about it.

Q: Is there a link between Bob Dylan in the sixties and the same person in the seventies, eighties and nineties?

BD: In a biological way only.

Q: Do you regret certain things from the past?

BD: There must be some but I'm not really a nostalgic person. I don't look back at the past.

Q: When was the last time you went somewhere without being recognised?

BD: I can't really remember. It's got to the point where I'm recognised everywhere I go. Every place.

(The Irish journalist makes himself heard) Do you have fun?

BD: DO I HAVE FUN? What does it mean to have fun? What do you want to talk about? (In an instant it is the Dylan of '*Don't Look Back*' who reappears, same tilt of the head, same voice, same ruthless sense of a rhetorical assassin). **What's fun? To kick a ball around?**

Q: Do you enjoy life?

BD: Is there a choice? What else can you do?

Q: Some people have chosen death.

BD: But not of their own free will.

Q: Do you feel at any stage that you have been a reflection of your times?

BD: I think that I always have been and still am. I don't feel it is possible for me to reflect any other era but my own.

Q: Do you reflect the times or react to them?

BD: Humm. A bit of both. I react to them more probably.

Q: Are your older songs like revisiting an old playing field?

BD: You know, my songs are always singable. They remain contemporary. Something didn't have to fall out of the sky yesterday for it to be of these times.

Q: You have written that the modern world is a sort of new Dark Ages.

BD: The Stone Age, let's put it like that. We speak about the Golden Age, which I believe would be that of Homer. You can still feel that era when you walk around Rome; you can feel the presence of those people. Today we are incapable of building what people constructed two thousand years ago. You come to realise how people from those times were vastly superior to us. We are not aware of those kind of things in the States.
Then we had the Age of Silver and then the Bronze Age and there was a Heroic Age somewhere in there. Then we have what we call the Iron Age, but it could be the Stone Age.

Q: Maybe the Silicon Age?

BD: Oh, yeah, (laughs) **that's right.**
(The German asks) Do you surf the Net?

BD: I'm frightened of the net. I fear that some depraved person may take me somewhere I don't want to go.

Q: How do you go about writing?

BD: I have so many ways that I can't talk about any one in particular. I take notes, I retrieve them, I pull ideas together. There are lots of ways.

Q: Do you look for inspiration in poetry? Either poets who have inspired you in the past or contemporary poetry?

BD: Humm. You know, I never studied poetry. I would like to find new writers but I haven't come across any. We are living in a time when the media has taken over everything. What can a writer think or write about that you don't see everyday in a newspaper or on television?

Q: There are still feelings that can be written about and expressed.

BD: Yes, but the media manipulates peoples emotions anyway. When Rimbaud was writing, William Blake, Shelley or Byron or any of these people, there probably wasn't any media. They were free to explore their minds.
(The Swede cuts into the conversation) And you don't feel free to write?

BD: I don't really do any writing. I don't sit down to write. My lines go into songs and they have a certain structure. They have to conform to an idiom that has an established form. They're not free-form and there's no point trying to throw in some ideological idea. It doesn't interest me at all. It can't be done in a song.

Q: But you've done it!

BD: I've done it? If I have done it, it was 'de facto,' but I've never intentionally started out with that in mind. I mean, I never have. Maybe some others have, but I haven't.

Q: Do you feel that television and the media killed off poetry and literature?

BD: Absolutely. Absolutely. Because literature is written for an audience. There's nobody like Kafka who just sits down and writes something without wanting somebody to read it.

Q: Every writer?

BD: Yeah, sure, the media does this for everybody. You can't see things that are more horrific than you see in the media. The news shows people things that they couldn't even dream about and even ideas that people thought they could repress, but they see them and they can't even repress them anymore. So what can a writer do when every idea is already exposed in the media before he can even grasp it and develop it?

Q: How do you react to all this?

BD: We live in a world of fantasy where Disney has conquered. It's all fantasy, them parks, trendy streets; it's all just science fiction. That's why I think that if a writer has something to say he'll have to say it within the science fiction world. Fantasy has become the real world. Whether we realise it or not, science fiction has become the real world.

Q: Do you listen to lots of music? Any new people?

BD: I don't know, who is new, in you opinion?

Q: Do you recognise a folk influence in hip-hop? Chuck D used to say about rap that it was the CNN of music, a narrative form of reflecting its time and its social environment.

BD: A folk influence. I don't know anything about that. I don't see things in that way. I've never had a chance to listen to rap and to what is supposed to be current music.

(The Dane manages to put a question) Springsteen once said that Elvis liberated people's bodies and Dylan liberated their minds.

BD: He said that? Liberate the mind? It's good to be liberated from everything... We should all think like that.

Q: Had you already met Elvis?

BD: Ahh, Hum. (long pause) **No. I never met him.** (another pause) **That's what I'm supposed to say about it.** (pause, then burst out laughing).

Q: Do you look for comfort in religion?

BD: I try, who would I be if I didn't try?

Q: 'Tarantula' has been translated again into French. Was that an attempt to become a poet in the traditional sense, or something experimental and unique?

BD: When the book first came out... at that time in my life, things were really taking off all over the place. Leonard (Cohen) **had put a book out about the same time but I really had no intention of writing one. My manager at that time** (Albert Grossman) **had had some offers and he was the one that kind of pushed me into it. I think someone must have asked him 'does Bob Dylan write books?' And he must have replied 'obviously, sure he writes books, in fact we're just about to publish one.' I think it was on that occasion that he made the deal and then I had to write the book. He arranged everything, fixed the publication date and then told me that I had to write it. I managed to do it very quickly. He did that two or three times. Once he set me up as an actor in a TV show and I knew nothing about it till the day it happened. I thought I was going to sing.** (Laughs) **These things happened in the early part of... last century."** (Laughs)

Q: There have been many books published about you. Have you read them?

BD: I haven't read any since the Bob Shelton one came out. I knew him and I don't know these other people. It's difficult to read about yourself because in your own mind things don't appear that way. It's like you're reading about other people. It all seems like fiction. So, if it's gonna be fiction, where's all the good stuff?

Q: Have you ever been tempted to tell your own story?

BD: Yeah, and to tell the truth I'm doing it right now. It'll be published shortly in article form, but as a book, a book of articles, because they are ongoing. What is interesting is that most of these memories are linked to songs. Some of them trigger recollections of others.

Q: Why are you doing this now? Is it a personal need to delve into your past?

BD: Oh, I think what I'm writing, has been trying to find its way out for some time now. Rather than making it some kind of self-serving story of my particular past. If it seems to happen that way, it's actually dissimilar in a lot of ways. I can do it because I'm a famous person so I use that fame because a lot of the things I might write about, other people know anyway. So with a person like myself, the process of doing it this way works. I just do it in my spare time.

Q: Is this a new kind of writing for you as opposed to songwriting?

BD: Not really. I can't compare the two.

Q: You've said you don't like listening to things from the past doesn't this autobiography force you to do just that?

BD: I'm just looking at everything from a new point of view. Many things go from one point to another without there being a reason. Why did they happen, could they have happened if something else hadn't happened? And if they seemed so bad at the time why did they bring long term benefits? I like to write. But I'm certainly not meticulous.

Q: What has been the most difficult time in your life to revisit?

BD: The toughest? Humm. (pause) **There have been some complicated moments where I had to tell the story as if it was about somebody else rather than myself. Basically you have to suppress certain ambitions in order to be who you need to be.**

Q: What ambitions?

BD: Aha! You'll have to read the book.

Q: In the songs on "Love and Theft" there are phrases that could seem autobiographical.

BD: Probably, I don't see how it could be any other way. But there's nothing premeditated. Many of these lyrics were written in sort of stream of consciousness sessions. I never sit down at a table and meditate about every single verse.

Q: Do you worry about how other people will analyse them?

BD: No, I've got no idea what other people might discover in the things I produce. Or do you mean analysis like Freudian or Idealist or Marxist? I really have no idea.

Q: You wrote 'For me the future is a thing of the past.'

BD: I said it for everybody. Aren't I the spokesman for a generation? I speak for all of us.

Q: When you play live you often sing old songs, like 'Song To Woody.' Is it more than just an abstract relationship with the past?

BD: It's because I'm happy to have written that song. Leaving everything aside, Woody Guthrie was a phenomenal performer. He's like Charlie Parker, Hank Williams or others of that stature.

Q: There have been important changes in your career. One of these happened in the middle of the sixties after "Blonde On Blonde," when you had the motorcycle accident. After some time "John Wesley Harding" came out and many people thought it was a different Dylan. It was the time of Love and Peace and the record was completely different from everything else. Was it the accident that changed things?

BD: It's difficult for me to know whether I made a conscious decision or not. But obviously, at that time I had no great desire to go out and play music. I never felt that I was part of that culture.

Q: Has your son Jacob heard the new record?

BD: I think he got it from one of his brothers or sisters. But I'm not sure, I've been traveling around for a long time.

23 July 2001
Press Conference (Dutch coverage)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

Source:
VARA TV MAGAZINE nr 36, 8 Sept. 2001, pp. 12-16, "Dylan spreekt"
HOLLAND
Interviewer: JAN VOLLAARD; Translation: Nelien

The interviewer starts to tell that he, among 11 others is asked for a press conference. Before the interview, they listened to "*Love And Theft*" a few times. The author complains that the others asked too much detailed questions (there is a small fight over one word from *Visions Of Johanna*; Jan Vollaard, the Dutch interviewer isn't that much an insider that he can worry about all those tiny details). The total interview takes two hours and one question follows the other quickly, so Dylan has hardly any time to answer and that doesn't do any good to the depth of the interview. He often answers vaguely or just with '**Exactly!'** Dylan was in very good humor and proud of *Love And Theft*.

The interview:

JV: Can you explain the title?
BD: Explain? Love and theft fits each other like fingers in a glove.
JV: Can one describe the music as dance music? We listened all morning...
BD: ...and you danced all morning? Sorry, but it wasn't my intention to write just a funny dance record.
JV: You go back to the music of the 40's and the 50's, western swing and rockabilly. Is it correct that this wasn't the case with your earlier work?
BD: Maybe you noticed that most of my songs are traditionally rooted. I don't do that on purpose. Charley Patton's 30's blues has made a deep impression on me and High Water (for Charley Patton) is, in my opinion, the best song of this record.
JV: Do the pioneers of the blues music, like Charley Patton and Robert Johnson deserve more respect in the American music history then they get?
BD: This was the case maybe 30 years ago, but these days their music is pretty well documented. John Hammond, who discovered me for Columbia, gave me in 1961 a record by Robert Johnson that was due to be released. Nobody had ever heard from him and the rerelease of his work made him available for a larger audience, then at the time small labels released his work.
(some more over Johnson)
JV: You are still singing your first composition '*Song to Woody*', is it still relevant?
BD: I am glad I wrote that song. Woody Guthrie is unique and still deserves some credit. All my old songs can be sung. A song does not have to be young to be up-to-date. I always tried to avoid modern topics and I try to write lyrics with an universal tradition
JV: Your voice has more depth on this album.
BD: My voice is never recorded the correct way. Producers have there own idea how a Bob Dylan record must sound. That idea does not always tallies with mine, that is why I worked without a producer this time. Producers used all kind of effects on my voice, so that it did not sound the way I actually sang it.

I found a young sound technician, who succeeded to record my voice purely. I always like the simple way, with the old-fashioned analogue equipment and antique microphones.

JV: Did the success of *Time Out Of Mind* enlarge your self-confidence when you started this album?

BD: I hardly ever listen to my own records and I have not listened to *Time Out Of Mind* for a long time. I am glad if there is an audience, but success does not influence my way of working. A song like Po' Boy wrights itself, and the melody and the lyrics develop from the successive chords.

I use blues…, 12 bars, or ballads that always has existed in their basics. The variation is brought by the arrangements, and the fearless way my musicians and I start on a new song.

JV: Are you aware that a lot of younger people come to your concerts, on the hand of their parents or grandparents?

BD: Thank God they do, I earn a living with live entertainment. People of my age die, or have other priorities and they don't come any more. Except for that bunch of people that are in the front rows and they are always the same. I play for the people in the back of the venue, because the ones in the front row come anyway, they like it whatever I do. I have a good perception of the audience I play for. It has different ages, and the new album is for all of them. If I made records for my own pleasure, I would record Charley Patton songs only.

JV: Do you think of your own mortality?

BD: Not so often, only when someone I know is buried. There are no doubts that my Never Ending Tour once has to end. The fact that we all die one day, connects people.

JV: In the song 'Lonesome Day Blues' the lyrical I sings: 'I wish that my mother was still alive'. Is that inspired by the death of your own mother in January last year?

BD: Probably. I don't see another motive (inducement). My lyrics develop in a stream of consciousness. I don't linger long on every word that comes to my mind.

JV: But your lyrics are analyzed by everybody, for example when you sing: 'The future for me is already a thing of the past'.

BD: I have the right to sing that, because I am the voice of a generation, haha! All the generations. I sing for everyone.

JV: Is 'Bob Dylan now' the same person as the 'Bob Dylan of the 60's'?

BD: Only in biological meaning!

After, the almost-fight with the Portuguese Dylanogist, who with a help of others realizes that he used a wrong quote from *Visions of Johanna* (He says **'history goes up…'** instead of 'Infinity goes up on trial' and he asks if this sentence has a special meaning in Rome), Dylan takes a break for cappuccino.

Second round.

JV: How did you celebrate your 60th birthday?

BD: As usual. I lit some candles and invited some friends and family.

JV: Do you follow the discussion about the question whether you have deserved the Literary Nobel Prize?

BD: I heard something about that. That should place me in the same category as Hemmingway and Steinbeck… I am not sure if I belong there.

JV: In a conversation with Allen Ginsberg you once said that fame does not have lasting value. How do you handle your 'living legend' status?

BD: 95% of the time it does not matter to me. I have learned to live with it. I never searched for it, fame chose me.

JV: Do you read poetry and do you consider yourself a poet?

BD: At this moment there are not so many interesting new poets, because the media absorb all the attention. Everything a poet can imagine is already shown on TV or in the newspapers. Emotions of people are beaten to death by the media. In William Blake's time, there was no TV. Poets had more freedom of expression possibilities. I am not someone that writes words on a piece of paper. There are certain criteria for a pop song and it is not useful to attribute an ideological value to the content. With my music, I've never had any ideological intention. I know people has projected their ideology on them, but that always happens beyond my influence.

JV: Do you read the Bible?

BD: Of course. Who does not?

JV: What is your opinion on the almost religious feeling that some hard-core fans have?

BD: I don't think that the people that attend a lot of my shows are 'par definition' hardcore fans. If there is a religion, what sacrifices do they bring? Themselves? In case of that I would like to attend such a meeting.

JV: Your admirers think that the value of your work has the same value as the Bible, because all important life issues are in it.

BD: Exactly. Great argument. Hahaha.

JV: Do you read books about yourself?

BD: The only one I've ever read is Robert Shelton's book. It is not easy to read about yourself, because things in reality happened in a very different way. There is always some fiction in it. While the really thrilling things are not in it. I am busy writing my own story of my live. It will be published in articles. I take the songs as the starting point, they are the key to many colorful memories.

JV: Is it true that you are happier in your tour bus then in any of your 17 houses?

BD: Yeah! The bus is pretty luxurious. But I have to say that I can feel at home at almost any place in the world.

JV: Are you proud of the music you've recorded throughout the 40 years?

BD: Like I've said, I hardly listen to my records, because during the recording of the songs they were not perfect yet. Through the years there has been a lot of my music released that in my opinion was not finished yet. That could happen because I don't have the patience to stay long in a recording studio. Most of the time I played the rough version of a song and played some guitar with it, like a demo version. It is not a coincidence that other groups, performers had bigger hits with my compositions then me, because they had more attention for the arrangements and structure.

Songs need structure: musical stability. This stability I have never been able to find, because my own songs always were new for me in the studio. I worried more about the lyrics, if a sentence did not fit well, or about the tempo than over the overall structure of a song. The producers hardly had any ideas about it, so I used my live performances to find the right structure of songs that were already released. Now I have the feeling that I made an album that harmonized with the music as I heard it in my head.

After this something happened, that had never happened to the interviewer before [and he has been around for a long time – N], the journalists applause! Bob smiles, has his photo taken with a journalist from Austria and when he leaves the room he mutters: **'so, and now it is time to visit the Coliseum'**.

23 July 2001
Press Conference (German coverage *Der Spiegel*, ver. a)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

Source: *ISIS* #99, Oct-Nov 2001, pp. 54-56.

Der Spiegel Interview
Interviewer: CHRISTOPH GALLACH

What follows are the parts that are different to the interviews published in the UK, Sweden and Italy.

Q: You once said that all producers you worked with were prisoners of the Bob-Dylan-myth. Is it correct you did the producers-job yourself on "Love And Theft"?

BD: Yes, that's right. Whoever controlled the recordings of my albums so far said to himself: Okay, that's a Bob-Dylan-record, and these are Bob Dylan-songs. They never reacted how my voice at this particular period really sounded, or the songs – they only fulfilled their own ideas how Bob Dylan's voice has to sound. That's why many of my albums ended as compromises.

Q: Which?

BD: Most. The studio versions actually never came up to my own expectations. That's something I always realize when we play a song live on stage, and it sounds completely different than on the album.

Q: This interview takes place in Rome. Is it frightening you that during a demonstration against globalization in Genoa a young man was shot by police?

BD: Shot? Here in Italy? Wow, probably I was busy working then. I have no idea. Sounds for me like a crime thriller by Raymond Chandler.

Q: In the Sixties you were worshipped as a political protest-singer. If there were already globalization-opponents, do you think you would've been with them on the streets?

BD: There was no consciousness for something like globalization then. But when you believe the reports in the media today, you must fear that the whole planet will be destroyed pretty soon. I think that's nonsense. The reality isn't that hopeless and dark as the modern media wants us to believe.

Q: Which purpose should these media-reports about catastrophes have?

BD: That's obvious. Somewhere somebody gains a profit in marketing violence and brutality. There's nothing presented in the media without somebody earning money out of it.

Q: How do you use the media?

BD: Not at all. I try to avoid them as much as possible.

Q: How do you get your information?

BD: Information is a question of your way of life... I'm a traveler, always on the road, there you have so many sources and get so many impressions you can make up your own picture very well.

Q: Not all people can always travel around the world.

BD: Don't get me wrong. I'm not completely against media. But they defeat their purpose, which should be to educate their audience. They present show, spectacle, and brutality instead.

Q: Wouldn't it be censorship not to show the brutality from Genoa?

BD: You're right. The freedom of speech is a precious fundamental right, in the USA it's even written in the constitution. But when speech becomes an industry, it's no free speech anymore, but a business.

Q: You want more idealism in the media world?

BD: I believe in idealism and idealists. But I haven't met some for a long time. Have you?

Q: It happens.

BD: Well, next time let me know and introduce me. That would be nice.

Q: re you interested in new, modern literature?

BD: Sure. But I can't find anything interesting.

Q: Does your refusal of poetry mean you refuse to go along with contemporary culture at all?

BD: Well, you won't believe it, but I love the ballet. I attend at least three or four performances a year. I love the ballet since my childhood. I like the mood, the lithe movements of the dancers and the absolutely staggering sound of an orchestra.

Q: But with literature, you're through?

BD: Literature is past. Movies are the new literature. Who has something to say today, makes a movie.

Q: What movies do you consider great literature?

BD: That's exactly the problem, because movies can't be great literature.

Q: Why?

BD: Because they're only a second-rate art-form. Literature leads you into the mind and into the heart of a fictive character. That's something no script or director can achieve. Movie-characters always remain distant, far away and flat on the screen. I've never seen a movie which would be better than the worst book I ever read.

Q: You exaggerate.

BD: I swear I'm serious.

Q: When was the last time you liked a movie?

BD: I prefer the times and I also like the music of, the 20's, 30's and 40's. And I'd rather watch a movie from 1948 than from this summer.

Q: What was better then?

BD: There wasn't so much noise about nothing, not so much nonsense talked... That's why I can identify more with characters from then. And I prefer black & white. I consider colors ugly.

Q: You don't like colors?

BD: Sometimes colors are okay. But when I have the choice, I prefer black & white. For my eyes that harmonizes better.

Q: So there was no remarkable movies in the last 50 years?

BD: Let me think. No, I can only think of off-putting examples.

Q: For instance?

BD: Let's take 'Godfather,' a movie about the scum of the earth. Human dirt like mafia to glorify horrifies me very much. Those criminals are no heroes – they're dirt.

Q: But the script was a novel.

BD: Sure, but in the movie you soon realize that the characters are scum. The film can present them as heroes because he never reaches beyond the surface. Only a book can show both the negatives and maybe also positive aspects of such characters.

Q: But there are also movies like *O Brother, Where Are Thou?* by the Coen-brothers – a work which made popular your beloved traditional American country – and blues-music again. The soundtrack was a great success in the USA.

BD: I was enthusiastic about the album and even watched the movie.

Q: But it's a modern film, and even in color?

BD: I like George Clooney. A very likeable guy. The scenes where he appears as a singer are unbelievably good.

Q: So it's a modern movie you like?

BD: Wrong, I only like the George Clooney scenes. Without him, it would have been rubbish. But I would watch any movie with George Clooney, this boy has heart. And he succeeded in getting a big audience for a music, which usually is considered as un-commercial by the media – so he proved how much the media cheats us. Should I tell you what is the best promotion?

Q: Please.

BD: Mouth-to-mouth-propaganda. That's why sometimes something slips through the net and proves that you can also have uccess with quality. Luckily there're still people who are enthusiastic about something because they know it's good, and not because it was forced by the media.

Q: s there any contemporary pop-music you like?

BD: You're asking the wrong person. I don't know anything about it. That I'm part of the entertainment industry doesn't mean I'm busy with it more than necessary. I don't listen to music to get entertained. I'm looking for substance. And if you want to know if I've discovered something remarkable recently, I'm sorry to answer 'No'.

Q: What do you think of Hip Hop singers?

BD: I don't know any, name me some.

Q: Eminem? Dr. Dre?

BD: I have no idea. I have never heard of them.

Q: But a long time ago, you worked with the Rap-pioneer Kurtis Blow. How could this happen?

BD: You know what? I have no idea. Was I good? I cant remember it any more.

Q: do the fanatics who come to every one of your concerts irritate you?

BD: They just happen to be there. I only play for the people standing further away. The people in the front rows come back anyway. The part of the audience in the back rows, who come for one night only, they are the people I want to reach.

Q: What strategy do you use to handle your fame?

BD: No strategy. Politeness works wonders.

Q: Do you think the older you get the better you are?

BD: I could if I'd concentrate on it.

Q: Is it true you practice boxing to remain fit?

BD: Who says that?

Q: The actress Gina Gershon says, you once hit her while practicing.

BD: Well, if she continues to talk like that, she'll get another punch.

23 July 2001
Press Conference (German coverage *Der Spiegel*, ver. 1)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

Source:
GERMAN VERSION from *Der Spiegel*, no. 37/2001, 10 September 2001, pp. 246-250
Interviewer: Christoph Dallach; translation: Stephanie D.

[Spiegel interviewer, Christoph Dallach, initially asked the questions with the group, where Dylan gave information for example on his attitude to the Internet […]. Afterwards Dylan granted a rare favour: Dallach was allowed to question the Master in a one-to-one conversation.]

"I think colors are horrible."
Bob Dylan about his fondness of black and white, the fateful power of the media and his new album "Love and Theft"

CD: Mr Dylan, four years after your last studio album you now present your new work "Love and Theft" – is that a contrast for you?
BD: No. I think these two things suit each other like fingers in a glove.
CD: Musically, the new record is a rousing tribute to historical styles of music such as Country-Swing, Blues and Rockabilly: Do you feel fine in the present or do you long for the bygone times again?
BD: I'm not a nostalgic person. OK, you're right, most of the songs have traditional roots, although I wrote all of them myself. However, I don't miss anything from the past. I enjoy living in the present.
CD: On the album, you really sound as if you are in a good mood that you haven't been for a long time. Do you have any fun in your life these days?
BD: Fun? What do you mean? Shall I kick a football? No, I am just there. And I think, I don't have other choice.
CD: You once said that all the producers you've ever worked with were prisoners of the Bob Dylan myth. Is it true that you took on the producer's job yourself for "Love and Theft"?
BD: Yes, I did. Whoever has controlled the recording of my records so far, repeated himself: "OK, this is a Bob Dylan record, and these are Bob Dylan songs." That means, they never reacted to what my voice or the songs really sounded like at that point in time – but they only realized their own idea of how Bob Dylan's voice had to sound like. Therefore, many of my records ended up in compromises.
CD: Which ones?
BD: Most of them. The studio versions have actually never corresponded to my original ideas. I always notice that when a song we play live on stage sounds completely different than on the record.
CD: Is it maybe because of your voice that almost all of the producers felt a drive to improve it later?
BD: No idea. I think that when you use old equipment, the more simply the better, then it's OK with my voice. But up to this record nobody has ever understood to record me decently yet.
CD: This conversation is taking place in Rome. Did it frighten you that at a demonstration during the G-8 Summit meeting in Geneva a young opponent of globalisation was shot dead by a policeman?

BD: Shot dead? Here in Italy? Wow, I must have worked at that time. No idea. Sounds like a crime thriller by Raymond Chandler.

CD: In the sixties you were admired as a political protest singer. If there had already been opponents of globalisation at that time, would you have gone out into the streets with them then?

BD: At that time there wasn't any consciousness for something like globalisation. But if you trust the media reports today, you have to fear that the whole planet will explode any minute. I think that this is nonsense. Reality is not nearly so hopeless and gloomy as the modern media industry tries to get us to believe.

CD: What purpose should any publicity of a catastrophe by the media have?

BD: That's really obvious. Somewhere someone profits from marketing violence and brutality. In the media nothing is presented without someone making money out of it behind the scenes.

CD: How do you use the media?

BD: I don't use them at all. I avoid them whenever I can.

CD: And how do you inform yourself?

BD: Information is a matter of the change of lifestyle. There are people who live in a house with a garden and a front door. In front of the door there arrives a daily newspaper every morning, and when those people come back home from work in the evening, they let themselves plunge into their armchair and, first of all, switch on their TV in order to see what's going on in the world. I am unfamiliar with all of this. I am a traveler, still on the road, there you have so many sources and you collect so many impressions that you can form own impression very easily.

CD: Not everyone can incessantly travel around the world.

BD: Don't get me wrong, I am not against the media on principle. But they miss their duty, which should be made up of the education of their audience. Instead they only present show, kick up a rumpus and brutality.

CD: Wouldn't it be censorship not to show that brutality of Geneva.

BD: There you're right. The basic right of the freedom of speech is valuable, in the US it is even legally established in the constitution. But when free speech becomes an industry, it isn't free speech any more but a business.

CD: You demand more idealism in the world of media?

BD: I believe in idealism and idealists. But I haven't met any for a long time. And you?

CD: It happens.

BD: Let me know and introduce me next time. That would be nice.

CD: A clever exegete once said: Elvis freed your body, Bob Dylan freed your mind. What do you say to this?

BD: It is a wonderful feeling to be freed. From whatever. I can nothing but recommend that to all.

CD: When you turned 60 in May there was a world-wide media circus. What did your party look like?

BD: Oh, nothing special. I bought some candles and invited the family.

CD: Recently you were awarded an Oscar and were heaped with honors. What do you think about the fact that you've been considered for the Nobel Prize for Literature for years?

BD: I've heard about that. But to what company does that bring me? In the one of people like Hemingway and Steinbeck? I don't know if I fit in this category.

CD: Are you interested in more contemporary, younger literature?

BD: Absolutely. But I can't discover anything interesting there. Times have changed. What should an author today write about anyway, what doesn't happen on TV or in the newspaper every day?

CD: What about emotions?

BD: But no author can work with emotions as strongly as the media do. Compared with today's situation literary figures such as Shelley, Rimbaud or Byron enjoyed almost luxurious freedom.

CD: You think that the media ruined literature and poetry?

BD: Oh, absolutely. Every writer, if he's not a Kafka, writes for a public – and today this is monopolized by the media. Especially the news broadcasts offer the public more than the wildest poets could dream of. What remains for belletrists and poets then? We live in a world in which science fiction has become reality long time ago. It is ruled by Disney. Everywhere there are artificial shopping-paradises and theme parks.

CD: Does your refusal of poetry mean that you refuse all contemporary culture completely?

BD: OK, you won't believe it, but I love ballet. Every year I go to at least three or four performances. I've loved ballet since my childhood. I like the atmosphere, the dancer's smooth motions and the staggering sound of an orchestra.

CD: But you're through with literature?

BD: Literature is outdated. Movies are the new literature. Whoever has to say something today makes a movie.

CD: Which movie is great literature for you?

BD: That's exactly where the problem lies, 'cause movies can't be great literature.

CD: Why?

BD: Because they are only a second-rate art form. Literature leads you into the head and the heart of a fictitious character. No screenplay and no director can achieve that. Film characters always keep their distance, always far away and flat on the screen. I've never seen a movie that would be better than the worst book I've read.

CD: You're exaggerating.

BD: I swear that I'm serious.

CD: When was the last time you liked a movie?

BD: I prefer the time of which I liked the music, the twenties, thirties and forties. And I prefer watching a movie from 1948 to one from this summer.

CD: What was better in those days?

BD: They didn't make such a great big fuss about nothing and they didn't drivel so many meaningless things; they just came to the point faster then. That's why, as far as movies are concerned, I can rather identify with the thoughts and characters from that time. And in addition to that I prefer black and white. I think colors are horrible.

CD: You don't like any colors?

BD: Sometimes colors are OK. But when I have a choice, I prefer black and white. As I see it, it harmonizes better.

CD: And in the last 50 years there hasn't been any remarkable movie?

BD: Let me think about it. No, I can only think of deterrent examples.

CD: For example?

BD: Let's consider "The Godfather", a movie about the scum of the earth. To glorify human dirt like the Mafia appeals me very much. Such criminals are not heroes – they are the filth.

CD: The model was a novel.

BD: Sure, but in the novel you'll recognize quickly that these characters are scum. The movie succeeds in portraying them as heroes, 'cause it never reaches below the surface. Only a book can level the negative and possibly also the positive sides of such characters.

CD: After all, there are also movies such as "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" by the Coen brothers – a work that has just made the traditional American Country and Blues music, which you love so much, popular again; the soundtrack with old and new recordings was an unexpected multimillion success in the US.

BD: I was delighted with this album and even watched the movie.

CD: Wait a second – but it's modern and moreover in color.

BD: I love George Clooney. A very pleasant guy. The scenes in which he appears as a singer are just incredibly good.

CD: So there is a modern movie you like after all?

BD: That's wrong, I only like the George Clooney moments. Without him it would have been just crap as well. But I'd watch every movie with George Clooney, the boy has a heart. And he succeeded in conquering an huge audience for a music which is commonly labeled as non-commercial by the media – and therefore, he proved how much the media deceive us. Shall I divulge to you what's the best advertising?

CD: Please.

BD: Mouth-to-mouth propaganda. Only through that sometimes something slips out off the net and proves that one can be successful with quality as well. Fortunately there are still people who get enthusiastic about something, 'cause they understand that it's good without its having been forced on them by the media.

CD: Once you have revolutionized the music world with your grasp at an electric guitar. Do you consider the excessive use of modern technology in the contemporary music world to be good?

BD: Today there's too much music that wouldn't be anything without technology. Actually everything that's popular at the moment. But that's no reproach, 'cause this generation grew up like that and hasn't experienced anything else.

CD: Is there contemporary pop music that appeals to you?

BD: You are asking the wrong person. I don't know anything about that. Just because I am part of the amusement industry it doesn't nearly mean that I occupy myself with it more than necessary. I don't listen to music in order to get entertained. I search for substance. And when you now want to know whether I've recognized anything there recently, I unfortunately have to answer no.

CD: What about hip hop?

BD: I only hear machines there.

CD: Are hip hoppers who tell stories to music not the folk singers of today?

BD: I don't know any names, name me some.

CD: Eminem? Dr. Dre?

BD: No idea. I've never heard of them.

CD: But a long time ago you once worked together with rap-pioneer Kurtis Blow. How could that happen?

BD: You know what? I absolutely don't have a clue. Was I good? I don't remember.

CD: You have been on a so-called "Never Ending Tour" since the late eighties and just in the past four years you gave about 450 concerts. What drives you?

BD: All of that "Never Ending Tour" talk is nonsense. If there's anything for sure in our world, then it's the knowledge that everything comes to an end one day. Our mortality is the one thing that connects us all, and nothing but the knowledge about that creates a greater proximity between people. I don't even think that I give a lot of concerts. In your world it might be a lot, in mine it is normal.

CD: What's your world?

BD: Perhaps that's the difference between Europe and America: between settled citizens and a tramp like me. Where I come from, the provincial towns are full of people who present their music somewhere else every day.

CD: Earlier you said that little you know about the current cinema and more contemporary literature: Do you at least read the books that are written about you?

BD: I only read a biography by Robert Shelton, and that only because I knew the author. It's strange to read books about your own life. In your own memory things always present themselves differently to what others experienced. To me these books are pure fiction.

CD: Have you ever thought of writing your autobiography?

BD: I have, and at the moment I am working on it. My memoirs are going to be rather a series of articles that will appear in a book. I can't say more about it at the moment.

CD: Does the fanatical zeal with which your fans analyse your songs and your statements bother you?

BD: It's strange what people discover in my works. What kind of analyses are these anyway? Freudian? Or perhaps Marxist-Freudian ones? I don't have a clue about all of that.

CD: Do the fanatics who come to all of your concerts irritate you?

BD: They are just there. I only play for the people standing at the back. Those in the first rows are coming back anyway. The back part of the audience who just come for one night, that's the one you have to reach.

CD: But the hard-core fans are the ones that admire you with almost religious zeal.

BD: Hard-core fans is an unpleasant term. These are people who buy all my records and come to many of my concerts, and that's wonderful, isn't it? But what religion do you mean? And what do they sacrifice to their God, these religious hard-core-super-fans?

CD: Among other things, a lot of money.

BD: Very good, then I'd like to know when and where they'll go sacrificing the next time. Then I'll go there, too.

CD: How much does the Dylan-myth affect your private life?

BD: To 95 per cent not at all. Everyone who is confronted with fame has to learn to deal with the remaining 5 per cent. (actual Dylan words: **"Well, 95 per cent of the time it doesn't affect my life"**)

CD: What strategy do you use in order to deal with your fame?

BD: No strategy. Politeness works wonders.

CD: Do you sometimes ask yourself: Why m?

BD: So far not yet. I know what it is I've done to be so famous.

CD: Are you thankful to your fate that you became a famous artist?

BD: I didn't choose music (actual Dylan words **"what it is you see me doing"**). **It chose me. If I'd had a free choice I would've rather become** (actual Dylan words **"I'd been something different"**) **a doctor, a scientist or an engineer. These are the professions** (actual Dylan words **"people"**) **I look up to and whom I respect. Entertainers are nothing special. They mean nothing to me.** (actual Dylan words **"I don't really look up to entertainers"**)

CD: A few years ago you were seriously ill. How long are you going to continue?

BD: That's hard to say. There might come the day when I'll decide that I've had enough. If the audience withdrew, that would very certainly be a reason, but you don't notice anything like that.

CD: Do you have a feeling that you are constantly getting better with the years?

BD: I could, if I concentrated on it.

CD: Is it true that you do boxing in order to keep fit?

BD: Me? Who claims that?

CD: The actress Gina Gershon says that you landed her once during the training.

BD: If she keeps on blabbing like that she'll get another punch round the ears.

CD: Mr Dylan, we thank you for the conversation.

23 July 2001
Press Conference (Austrian coverage *NEWS*)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

Source:
AUSTRIA, News 36/01, "Dylan spricht" 6 September 2001, pp. 182-184
Interviewer: Thomas Zeidler, translation: Stephanie D.

"Dylan speaks"

TZ: You define "Love and Theft" as a greatest-hits album without the hits…

BD: Exactly! This album is possibly the greatest one of my milestones. You see, one never knows such things at the release, but only many, many years later. And I think that they will still write about it positively even in ten years.

TZ: That is probably your very first record one could even dance to.

BD: I am sorry! Or is that possibly even a compliment (laughs)**? This is the first of my records that I am completely contented with, 'cause, earlier my voice had always been recorded the wrong way. My producers were probably in too much awe of me and let themselves be overwhelmed by my myth. None of my old songs sounds on a record as I wish it would.**

TZ: Is "Love and Theft" the best Dylan-record?

BD: It is just the newest!

TZ: For whom do you actually make your records?

BD: Not for myself! If I made music for myself, I would only cover old Charly (sic!) **Patton songs.**

TZ: And your concerts?

BD: I entirely play for my audience in the back rows. I don't pay any attention to the people in front of the stage, for these are mostly faces I know, who approve of what I do anyway. But at the very back, these are the people you have to conquer.

TZ: Do these hardcore-fans get on your nerves?

BD: No, I don't care.

TZ: Do you consider yourself to be a good singer?

BD: No idea!

TZ: In 1997, you stated that through the years you have already been used to swallowing devastating reviews of records as well as of concerts.

BD: I don't remember any more what I said at that time. But I would not pay too much attention to it anyway. What for? Should people today still pay attention to what you wrote years ago?

TZ: What is your motivation?

BD: My audience. I don't know if I would still do all that if the audience would stay away one day. However, I am lucky that they still listen to me, and although many of my former fans are dead long since or devote themselves to other priorities than insipid entertainment.

TZ: Is Bob Dylan insipid entertainment?

BD: I don't think so, but the genre I am in is generally called like that.

TZ: At your concerts, one hardly recognizes your old songs…

BD: The songs should actually have always sounded as they do today live. Because all of my records have always been underdeveloped. All of them are actually only demos, ideas not thought through to the end. Therefore, it is no wonder that all the others were much more successful with my songs than I myself. For a while I let myself be overrun by incompetent producers in my efforts to unite lyrics, tempo and tune, they could have

these songs matured. Yet, one reason why I let all this happen was my knowledge that I could compensate for all on stage later.

TZ: Do your old songs appear to you still current anyway?

BD: Sure. I am proud that I recorded them and that I can still sing them today. My songs are up-to-date as ever, 'cause nothing has to appear from completely out of the blue just now in order to be of current interest.

TZ: Which of your hitherto 43 albums do you consider to be the one of the most artistic merit?

BD: I don't listen to my records, but I think that every single one of them is as much of an artistic merit as it bristling of mistakes.

TZ: Why do you disregard your own records?

BD: I don't listen to them because no song is perfect.

TZ: Do the songs have a common origin?

BD: Possibly. However, the only thing that really counts is the fact: $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$.

TZ: Do you sometimes catch yourself composing new songs which you have already recorded years ago?

BD: Never!

TZ: Do you recognize a line between the Bob Dylan of the 60s and the Bob Dylan of today?

BD: At the most, in the biological sense.

TZ: It seems as if today you would feel finer you are happier in the tour bus than in one of your 17 houses.

BD: These buses have become more and more luxurious as time goes by (laughs)**. No, I just feel at home everywhere I am staying and fortunately I don't know any form of homesickness.**

TZ: For years you have been on the "Never Ending Tour".

BD: There is no "Never Ending Tour", 'cause in life everything has to come to an end. Death is the only thing we, human beings, have in common, you know.

TZ: Do you reflect on death?

BD: Hardly ever, but of course losing people that are close to you hurts?

TZ: Does your own death occupy you?

BD: I recognize myself in others. I don't think more about it, for as soon as a person enters this planet, he or she is already old enough to leave it again.

TZ: You enjoy almost religious worship.

BD: That really is nonsense, for what kind of religion or faith is it about? And what sacrifices does one have to make for it? And, above all, where? Since, actually I would like to be there once!

TZ: Nevertheless, your complete works have been considered for a long time to be the New Testament.

BD: It has been written like this and that is how it is, too!

TZ: Is Eminem a poet?

BD: Unfortunately, I have no idea who this Eminem is. The present-day music scene has never been of my personal concern.

TZ: Do you think the media kills the poetry?

BD: Absolutely! There are no more dreadful things than those you get served in the news every day. This surely does not leave any open space for imagination. So what shall an author still write about, when even the worst nightmares have been transported through the media long since?

TZ: How can one take action against it?

BD: We live in a science-fiction world, a world that Disney has conquered. A world with its amusement parks and trend-shopping streets. That is all science-fiction. As an author, you have to look over the edge.

TZ: An edge [outside] of reality?

BD: Science-fiction has become reality long since, whether we accept it or not.

TZ: There are dozens of Dylan-biographies. Have you read all of them?

BD: You must be joking! The last Dylan-book I read was Robert Shelton's biography (ed. from the year 1988). **And this only because I knew the author. It is very hard to read about yourself, because everything seems so strange, so incredibly fictitious. And when all this is fictitious, where are all the nice things then** (laughs)**?**

TZ: Perhaps in your own memoirs?

BD: I am working on them at the moment! These are my experiences of life in form of articles (ed. planned for 2002)**. Why I do that? Since I am a famous person, people have already known these things for ages anyway and someone may want to read my version of it as well.**

TZ: Is it easier to write music or books?

BD: You cannot compare that at all. I consider my book to be more like a leisure-time activity than a job.

TZ: With "Tarantula" you already tried to establish yourself an author in the 70's.

BD: Writing was extremely mind-expanding. I think, John Lennon had his book published just at that time, and therefore my manager was approached by a publisher: "Dylan writes all these nice songs, what else does he write?" And that is how it came to the book. I had never planned it, just like a number of my appearances as an actor. I had always thought that I would only go into a TV-studio in order to sing. But things like that happen – in the early days of the last century.

TZ: Are you are more careful today?

BD: Not more careful. I just don't trust anyone any longer!

TZ: Is there a period in your life which you consider extremely complicated?

BD: I am sure there were lots of them. Sometimes you just have to fail miserably in order to get on.

TZ: What is it that you failed?

BD: (laughs) **You have to find that out by yourself.**

TZ: In March you were awarded an Oscar.

BD: And although I haven't even been there live. So you see how important awards are to me (laughs)**.**

TZ: Do you surf on the Internet?

BD: No, because I am afraid of it. I fear that some perverts would lead me to extremely bad pages.

TZ: What is it like to be Bob Dylan?

BD: Here I am the last one who could answer this. That is a purely philosophical question for philosophical concerns.

TZ: I guess no one has been analysed as often as Bob Dylan.

BD: I don't know what people see in me or my songs, either. Why does it have to be analysed? And, above all, how? Is it going to be a Freudian analysis or German idealism or even Freudian Marxism?

TZ: Have you ever tried to be anyone else?

BD: Sure! But don't all of us try to do this since the moment of our birth?

TZ: Anything to sum up [the interview]?

BD: All the people who think they know me and my music so completely don't have the faintest idea!

23 July 2001
Press Conference (Austrian coverage *Kurier*)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

Source:
AUSTRIA, Kurier / Interviewer: Thomas Zeidler / Translation: Stephanie D.

Only the parts not covered in the NEWS coverage.

"ENGINEER OR DOCTOR"

[…]

TZ: When was the last time you remained unknown?
BD: I can't remember that any more. I think they know me every time and everywhere.
TZ: Do you sometimes ask yourself: Why me?
BD: Not any more! 'cause I know what it is I've done to be so famous.
TZ: But wasn't there a lot of luck involved either?
BD: A bit. […]
TZ: Would you have a chance at all as a newcomer today?
BD: I think so. […] **And today I know much more about what I actually do than at my beginnings. I'd always find a niche. But I wouldn't want that any more. As I already said, I'd take up other jobs, more important ones.**

[…]

TZ: Your 60th birthday in May was celebrated with adulation world-wide. Did you find that a nuisance?
BD: No. I don't care.

[…]

TZ: You were heaped with prizes lately.
BD: That's true, suddenly I win incredibly much. That's funny, isn't it? But perhaps they only/just give that to me as a compensation, 'cause they think that they forgot about me sometime.

[…]

23 July 2001
Press Conference (Swiss coverage *Sonntagszeitung*)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

SWISS VERSION from SonntagsZeitung, 9 September 2001
Interviewer: Rudolf Amstutz; Translation: Vessie

"I don't know what people can see and find in my whole stuff."

RA: Bob Dylan, you release your new album, "Love and Theft" on 10 September. Do you think that it is your first album people could dance to? We were listening to it all morning and...

BD: ... and were you dancing all the morning? So I'm sorry for that.

RA: Was it your intention to make a dancing, happy album?

BD: Ah... no.

RA: You said that "Love and Theft" was something like your greatest hits album without greatest hits.

BD: Yes. I meant, it could be possible, perhaps in the future, that "Love And Theft" would be revealed as a milestone. Many of my earliest songs got their real value some years later. The same may happen with this album. It is not to me, however, to verify their place in ten years.

RA: Do you think that the success of *Time Out Of Mind* accounts for the lively sound of "Love And Theft"? Does this success give you any kind of self confidence?

BD: No, I always make what I want. I have the chance to have a public.

RA: And your audience continues to age. Are you surprised that your public is younger than ever?

BD: Now, people of my age or die or go into eclipse or...

RA: There are undoubtedly fans of your age.

BD: Some, yes, but not many. Their life has changed during last years. They have founded families and have other priorities than light entertainment.

RA: Do you see your music as light entertainment?

BD: Perhaps less for me, but in commerce of culture I am qualified as light entertainment.

RA: Is there a linking idea between the 60-year-old Dylan and the Dylan of 17, 18 or 19?

BD: Biologically already seen (smiling).

RA: Has your process of writing changed during these years?

BD: I always had different manners of writing my songs. It's the reason why I can't say I have found a new way. Sometimes I find only a pair of notes, then I find the text later, and the melody complies with it. There are so many ways to write a song. Process of writing is the shortest part of the whole performance.

RA: Live performance is for you the most important part. Has anything changed? Do you know what you'll do before coming on stage?

BD: I don't think it has changed. I am almost certain of what will happen on stage. I always play for the back part of the audience, never for those who are stuck to the stage. These ones come to my concerts anyway. I always play for people who, perhaps, come for the first time hear me.

RA: In recent concerts, you pose in a way that resembles Elvis...

BD: Is this a critic or a compliment?

RA: A compliment!

BD: That's right.

RA: Bruce Springsteen said of you: Elvis freed your body and Dylan freed your mind.

BD: I always found it's good to be free, from anything (laugh)

RA: You are in an almost Never Ending Tour. Why do you give so many concerts?

BD: I don't think I give too much concerts. Perhaps more than other bands, who make tours after a new album and then make a pause. But I am sure that in Europe, there are many bands who give a lot of concerts. In the USA there are many anyway.

RA: But you named your tour the Never Ending Tour

BD: This is only the title, and one should not think too much about it. This irritates me how people interpret it. It is clear that all things must end, at any time. Unavoidable. Even if we distinguish between humans, what we have in common is our mortality.

RA: Do you often think about it?

BD: Not so often. Except when close people die.

RA: And about your own mortality?

BD: Only in the death of others can I recognise my own death.

RA: In 2 new songs, *Lonesome Day Blues* and *Po' Boy*, the narrator wants his mother to be still alive or remembers how she died. Were you influenced by your own feelings?

BD: Possibly.

RA: You placed this not deliberately?

BD: I never place myself in the direction of anything, I meditate only on single text lines.

RA: Do you fear for the analysis of your texts by others?

BD: No. I don't know what people can see and find in my whole stuff.

RA: When you play your earliest songs, like *Song To Woody*, do you remember knowingly of this specific moment or is it in an absent manner?

BD: Today, I am still glad to have written this song. Woody Guthrie was a phenomenal performer and belongs to the greatest, like Charlie Parker or Hank Williams and all the others, who are sitting above.

RA: I meant, these songs are so far away that they are becoming like a sort of a game.

BD: Now, all my songs can be sung. They are up to date. What is up to date doesn't obligatory fall in one minute from the sky. We live now – I think so – in Iron Age. Is it right ? Anyway, there was Bronze Age before. We live still in the era, during which I wrote all my songs. You walk in this city and contemplate all these edifices. Now people are not able to realize such things. There were people here before and foremost with higher spiritual level that we can ever have. Things don't have to be from now and can however be up to date.

RA: Newspapers all around the world celebrated your 60th anniversary in May. Did you do it as well?

BD: As anybody else. Family and some candles and so on.

RA: Recently you have won some illustrious prizes like Grammy for *Time Out Of Mind* and an Oscar for *Things Have Changed*.

BD: Oh yes, I have collected a lot of stuff, these years. Somehow comic, uh?

RA: You are also a candidate for the Literary Nobel Prize.

BD: Yes, I heard of it. In what company will this place me? I don't know exactly...

RA: Hemingway, Steinbeck...

BD: ...Oh Hemingway. I'm not sure, he wrote articles for the *Time* Magazine. I don't know if I belong to this category.

RA: Do you see yourself on a high or a low plain?

BD: I don't think about it, all this is rather relative.

RA: Do you feel during the day that you are tightened to the fact that you are celebrated as a legend?

BD: This has no influence on me for 95 per cent of the time. I don't feel that I belong to the world prominence, the so-called "famous people".

RA: Your 40-years-long career, your work and all the details have been pursued and commented. Would you have appreciated to be isolated from this, to make more music?

BD: Partially, but I have never chosen what I have done or what I do. Music has chosen me.

RA: Even if you don't like to talk about the past, do you regret anything of any period?

BD: Perhaps I should, but no, I don't feel any nostalgia for any period or fashion.
RA: Do you savor your life now?
BD: Now yes, I'm there. Do I have another choice? (laughs)
RA: Would you have any chance now as a newcomer in music business?
BD: Oh yes, I would have capacity, knowledge and endurance. It is what is necessary. I'm now more aware than before, of what I can and what I make. I think that, as a newcomer, I would find a place. However, if I would make it again is another question.
RA: When will you leave the stage?
BD: No idea. I would say, as soon as the public reduces. But it doesn't seem to be the case. I don't know, perhaps one day, I'll have enough and stop.
RA: Where do you take this energy to continue the tour?
BD: This energy that you quote, I don't need it. Energy is for me a fictitious concept. You learn during years to live of your work. Actions, experience, strategies are developed during years. You also learn to play economically. These are all little things which lighten up the daily life of the tour and preserve energy and emotion.
RA: Do you think – like many observers – that you are becoming better and better these days?
BD: (thinking) **I know that I could be better, but if I became better??** (shrugs his shoulders)
RA: *Love and Theft* is perhaps the best Dylan that we have ever heard...
BD: Perhaps. I don't sing better than on earliest albums, but my voice was better recorded.
RA: Do you follow today's culture? Do you observe what the youngest generation makes?
BD: Clearly I do. But I think, there are only just some young authors, because we live in a constantly changing world. The media are overrepresented. What can a writer write about, which hasn't already been seen on the TV or read in the newspapers?
RA: But there are feelings here that could be formulated.
BD: Yes, but the media govern also people feelings. When we talk about the past, about poets like William Blake or Lord Byron – then, there were no media. They could bring onto paper, whatever came to their mind.
RA: Do you think that Media – specially TV – have killed poetry?
BD: Oh, absolutely. Not anyone is a Kafka and writes things which are in fact not thought by a large public. Every author wants his writings to be read. He needs people's reaction and looks for a certain acceptation of his performance. Now people are fed persistently by the media. Whatever can increase horror is seen on TV-News. News editorial staff serve anything to people, even what doesn't appear in dreams.
RA: How do you react to this?
BD: Outside, there is a science-fiction world. We live in a world conquered by Disney: Theme parks, trendy streets – all science-fiction. I react with my possibilities. We have already discussed we are in the Iron Age. Perhaps we return to the Stone Age.
RA: Silicon Age...
BD: Exactly (laughs and hits his thighs)**.**
RA: Do you take a part of this science-fiction world? Do you go on the Internet?
BD: I'm afraid to go to the Internet. It could be possible, you are importuned by perverse people.
RA: What do you say to your hardcore fans, who follow you with a fervour quite religious?
BD: Oh, I don't think I have any hardcore fans.
RA: But, this admiration, nearly religious...
BD: Do the fans sacrifice themselves for me? If they do, I'll admit I have hardcore fans. Tell me where and when they sacrifice, I will be there.
RA: People say, your overall work is like the Bible
BD: This would explain why I keep on singing (laughs)**.**
RA: Have you ever thought to write down your own life?
BD: I am actually writing my memories.
RA: When will you publish them?

BD: Soon. They will appear in a book-form, but the buildup is a sequence of articles. I decided myself because the series was broadening consecutively.

RA: You have already published a prose book, *Tarantula*.

BD: About it, I have to say, that, then, everything was quite woozy. I didn't have the intention to write a book. Leonard Cohen's manager said once to him: "What, you also write books?". And Leonard said: "Yes, I do." Then the manager: "So, let's publish it." With my book, it was similar. My manager arranged all, and the only work I had to do was writing. He also inscribed me as actor in a TV-Show and I was completely unknowing and thought I had to sing. Such things have passed. So was it then, somewhere in the middle of last century. (nodded fatherly).

RA: Is it now easier to be Bob Dylan than before?

BD: God, you should not ask me that. It is a philosophic question.

RA: Have you ever wanted to be somebody else?

BD: Who hasn't? We all try to be somebody else.

RA: Which of your albums is in your opinion the most successful?

BD: (meditates and winding) **Anyway, they are all successful and failed so to speak. The problem is that, each time, copies are circulating before official release. This happened in my case too often. Above all, you could hear most of songs, which finally do not appear on discs. Many people reproach me I am unable to estimate my own things, because the best songs are missing on my discs. The fact is: I have never missed out songs, because I would have falsely estimate them, but because I really thought they would be badly perceived. This is not the case with *Love and Theft*, because there are no more songs as authentic as in the album. A demo recording from all material exists namely, but fortunately it doesn't hold out. It wouldn't be possible ten years ago; then, the trashy version was already for a long time on the black market.**

RA: You proceed now more carefully?

BD: No, I don't trust anybody any more, simply as that.

RA: Year after year, day after day, you play your own songs on stage. How have you changed these songs during this time?

BD: The answer is in what I have already said. My discs are like undeveloped. From the first day on. There is no hazard if other singers have more success than me with my songs. They recognize that my songs have structure. But for me personally the structure is definitive and I don't feel myself allowed to develop it or cultivate. However, I have to admit I haven't tried to defend myself against this. I knew that I have the possibility to correct all this on stage.

RA: So, all what a song needs is a structure?

BD: A structure and stability. Thereafter, you can contribute any text. I say that a singer who goes on stage has everything to bear. On discs this doesn't appear because at the exact time of recording, the song is also new for me. There I try to pass my lyrics in a framework or to change a key, a tempo or the dynamic. And *Love and Theft* sounds exactly as if it was intended. Exactly so.

RA: So it is then your best album?

BD: (laughs) **It is quite surely the more recent.**

23 July 2001
Press Conference (Norwegian coverage *Dagbladet*)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

NORWEGIAN VERSION from Dagbladet, 7 Sept 2001
Interviewer: Frederik Wandrup; Translation: Dag B

Dylan writes book on his life

ROME (Dagbladet): Bob Dylan (60) is well into a script on his life. The book will be published in the near future.

Dagbladet recently met Dylan in Rome and asked if he's considered writing his life story, which has been exposed in one biography after another.

Yes, said Dylan, **As a matter of fact, I'm well into a script that will be published in book form.**

FW: Is it some sort of memoirs?
BD: Yes, it is. It's a series of articles, that will be published as a book. That's all I can say
FW: Will it be out soon?
BD: Yes.

Writes at home

FW: Does the fact that you're writing your memoirs have any influence on the songs you sing on stage?
BD: It's interesting you should say that. Because some of the chapters use certain songs as starting point. I think it's a good way to get into the past. It brings back some memories.
FW: Do you write while you're on the road?
BD: Some of the ideas develops while I'm on the road, but I write when I get home.
FW: Why did you feel that this was the right time to write your memoirs?
BD: For me it was about finding the right way to get into the subject. I don't want to make some sort of serve-yourself version of the story of my special past. It won't come out that way. I see the story from angles it didn't occur to me to use earlier. A lot of the things that happen to us, happens without any particular purpose. We go from here to there, but don't know why. Why did this happen, but not this? Could this have happened, if not this had happened first? Things that were painful when they happened might have done some good in the long run.

"Tarantula"

FW: Is it hard to go back into the past?
BD: I'm interested in the writing, but I don't struggle with it. It comes out of me, but from different starting points. The book is written from several different angles. I can write the way I do because I'm a famous person. People are already familiar with a lot of the stuff I write about. I can take things for granted. With a person like myself this is an efficient process.
FW: Do you write fiction?
BD: No, I don't write fiction.
FW: So you won't write a follow-up to "Tarantula", from 1966?
BD: That book has a story of its own. Things got a little out of hand at that time. I had no intention of writing a book. Didn't Leonard (Cohen, ed.) **write a book? I had a manager** (Albert Grossman ed.)**, and someone asked him: "He writes all these songs. What else does he write?" He probably replied "What do you need?" "Does he write books?" And**

he answers: "Of course, he does." "We would like to publish one." I think that's probably the way it happened. My manager set everything up, then it was up to me to write the book. It wasn't something that I set out to do. But he did stuff like that from time to time. He sent me to a TV-show where I was going to be an actor. I didn't have a clue. But all this happened....in the last century. A very long time ago, says Bob Dylan.

23 July 2001
Press Conference (Swedish coverage *Dagens Nyheter*)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

Source:
DN (Dagens Nyheter), Sweden
Taken from expectingrain.com
Interviewer: Nils Hansson; Translation: Tobias Levander

A ROCK LEGEND FULL OF SURPRISES

ROME. He's a rock icon with a thousand different disguises – from reclusive family man to fervent preacher, from weird painter to golf player. DN's Nils Hansson has, as the only Swedish journalist, met Bob Dylan during a day-off on his "never ending tour".

He's 15 minutes late. He sits in a sofa behind a wall of microphones and tape recorders, he's growing a thin, old-fashioned moustache and he's wearing a white cowboy hat. He looks strikingly thin and small. In front of him there are thirteen journalists, tense, full of adrenaline and with a thousand questions to ask.

The anticlimax is immediate. Bob Dylan seems to be uncomfortable and nervous, saying **"eh, hmm, I don't know"** and he only gives the briefest of answers. Someone says that the new record *Love And Theft* is
the first Dylan album you can dance to.

Oh, I'm sorry, says Bob Dylan and it's hard to tell if he's serious or not.

It's an off-day on Dylan's European tour. The next day he's supposed to play in Anzio, a resort town just south of Rome, yet another of the 100+ concerts he performs every year, on what his fans call the Never Ending Tour, a phrase that Dylan hates.

Four hours before the interview, all the invited journalists – thirteen journalists from twelve European countries, gather in a luxurious hotel to listen to the new album, "*Love and Theft*", and eat delightful sandwiches and drink wine.

After just a few seconds everyone realises that this is no straight follow-up to 1997's "*Time Out Of Mind*", an album characterized by bitterness and gallows humor. "*Love and Theft*" is old-timey, happy and extremely varied. You can hear blues, rockabilly, old-timey jazz and songs that could have been ballads from, say, 1948.

The expectations on *Love and Theft* are high, much higher than when Dylan released one lacklustre album every year during the 80's. The predecessor, *Time Out Of Mind*, got more rave reviews than anything he's done in two decades, and it's one of his greatest commercial successes. Since then he's picked up three (American) Grammies, an Oscars statuette and a Polar Music Prize.

When I ask him how these successes affect his career he answers that he never listens to his old albums. When I remind him that he in an interview declared that he had no idea how to handle all these praises – after being dismissed so many times – he interrupts:

I have no idea what I said back then. Don't you worry about it. It's like something you wrote five years ago, who cares about that now?

Everyone's laughing. I feel embarrassed. Bob Dylan, every journalist's nightmare, is as mean as he's ever been.

But he's not unfriendly. He's slippery and vague, but he's surprisingly funny. He seems to enjoy this mental wrestling with journalists.

That Bob Dylan gives an interview is news in itself. He is known as one of the more unwilling interview victims in rock music. Few musicians have as Bob Dylan punctured a question, bounced it back to the journalist, or just answered with a one-syllable non-answer or just been better in avoiding to specify anything.

Of course, Bob Dylan doesn't have to kiss anyone's ass. He's perhaps the most important artist of the 20th century, in any category. At least he's one of the few who can compete for that title. He could have withdrawn completely in 1966, and still be known as the person who raised the IQ of rock music more than anyone else, before or after.

Instead he's spent the last 35 years doing what no one expected of him. He's been a reclusive family father, he's been a fundamentalist preacher, he's sung evergreens and old standards, he's collaborated with Johnny Cash and Michael Bolton, he's been painting quite strangely an he's done a few weird films, he's rearranged his old songs so no one can recognize them and he's started to play golf.

All this can be seen as attempts to deconstruct the Bob Dylan myth, or to tempt the fans' patience so that just a manageable number will remain.

It's also possible to view all this as simple confusion. Confused or not, Dylan has been able to deliver at least one masterpiece every decade, "*Blood on the Tracks*" in 1975, "*Oh Mercy*" in 1989 and "*Time out of Mind*" in 1997.

There is one thing Dylan loves to talk about. "*Love and Theft*" is recorded without any heavy-handed producer – which is paradoxical, since *Love And Theft* sounds more produced than any Dylan recording in recent memory – and it's all because all producers are jack-asses and clumpsy lots, to put it simply.

Producers can take you wherever they want, Dylan says. **It happens as soon as you're not sure if a song should be in a certain way or not. Most of my records turned out to be compromises because of insistent producers. But if you have your own vision, there's really not much a producer can contribute. I don't know much about sound quality, but the arrangements are exactly like I wanted them this time.**

The same applies to his voice, that this sounds deeper and more varied than on any previous record.

I've never been recorded in a good way, he says. **It seems like my special vocal range disturbs the entire system, both the low and the high register disappears. On my last record they tried all kinds of effects and overdubs to make my voice sound like it does in real life. But on this record we had a young guy who knew exactly how to do.**

Bob Dylan's sitting here in front of me and he's basically dismissing everything he's ever done, except the latest record. Every album is a blueprint and a compromise. Except the new one, of course.

It's no coincidence that other singers have had bigger hits with my songs than I've had, he says. **I'm basically just singing a song with a guitar. It's called making a demo.**

It's this attitude that's behind this famous habit to drastically reinterpret his classics onstage, he says. **That they never turned out out the way they should on record. But since he's always able to get up onstage the next night and correct what went wrong the night before these things don't matter too much anymore.**

He's also often dismissed songs for a while, hoping to do them full justice at some later point. But before he's had any chance to return to them, they have turned up on some bootleg. And by then it's not too much fun to get back to the studio and record them again.

A song like that is included on the new album, and that's because Bob Dylan is guarding the outtakes harder than ever before. "*Mississippi*" was recorded for "*Time Out Of Mind*", but it was not included on the album. Now it's on "*Love and Theft*", but only because the original version never leaked out.

It would never have happened ten years ago, he says. **All you would have heard was the original, lousy version.**

Bob Dylan has just finished his 31st studio album and he's for once happy. With good conscience he can keep playing that same unexpected mix of old and new songs, sometimes his own, sometimes other's, he's played for all these years.

He's not just discontent with his records, he's also discontent with his line of work:

I didn't really choose to do what you are seeing me do right now. It choose me. If I had any choice I would have been a scientist, an engineer or a doctor. That's the kind of people I look up to. But I'm an entertainer. I'm in light entertainment.

He's singing his songs for an audience that isn't what it used to be.

Some fans remain, but not many. You know, at a certain age people starts to get families and give priority to other things.

Someone asks him about his most devoted fans, the people who just get too close, but Bob Dylan seems unwilling to even admit that there are fans like that.

I don't think I have any hardcore fans, he says. Some people attend many concerts, but I don't think of them as hardcore..

New attempt: But these people who see you as a religious object....

Yeah, that's right, what kind of religion is that? Dylan asks. **What are they sacrificing? And to whom? I would like to know where they are making their sacrifices. I would like to be there.**

We (the present journalists) try to ask Dylan more about the supposed conflict between himself and the public image of him. He doesn't like when people he's working with are too adoring,

but he says that the Bob Dylan myth is of no importance during 95% of a 24-hour period. The rest of the time he just has to be nice.

But he also says that there's no place where he won't be recognized, and that he can't remember when he last visited such a place.

Someone asks what it's like being Bob Dylan today, if it's more simple than before. He answers that he's the wrong person to ask. I ask him if he's having much fun and he answers:

What's funny? To kick a ball around?

Maybe to enjoy life, I say.

I'm here. What more can I say? Is there a choice?

I say that some people have committed suicide.

Yeah. But not voluntarily.

It's typical. He never looks happier than when he's disarmed a tense situation with a witty remark. Someone asks him: Did you ever meet Elvis Presley?

No, I never met him. That's what I'm supposed to say.

He isn't dismissing all questions, however. On his new record he sings repeatedly about the sorrow after his mother's death. Someone asks him if these lines have anything to do with his own mother's death.

Probably, he says slowly. **I can't understand how it couldn't be like that. Many of these lyrics are written in a "stream of consciousness" kind of mood, and I don't meditate on them afterwards. My way to get to grips with something is often just to go right ahead.**

Otherwise, Bob Dylan is reluctant to comment on his lyrics, even though many journalists want him to explain them.

It's very rare that Bob looks back and tries to explain and adjust things of the past. Everyone looks up when Bob says that he's writing an autobiography.

It will be published in the form of articles. But in a book. The point of departure will be the different songs, I've noticed that it's a good way of remembering things from the past. That's how I got started, I found this way of working.

Currently, I'm studying the songs, but I look at them in a way I never thought of before. Much of what is happening is just passing through, but now I'm trying to find some kind of purpose. Various bad things lead to something good. Could this have happened if this didn't happen? It's an enormous project, and I'm doing it all in my spare time. My impressions are from a great number of songs, and I'm trying to see things from many points of view, and it's so much fun to write.

The most surprising statement of the interview comes late. Someone asks him about the line: "the future for me is already a thing of the past".

In his answer he's using a cliché he's spent decades trying to get away from:

I'm speaking for all of us. I'm the spokesman for a generation.

-Nils Hansson

23 July 2001
Press Conference (Italian coverage *La repubblica*, ver. a)
De la Ville Inter-Continental Roma Hotel, Rome, Italy

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Interviewer: Gino Castaldo; Translation: Michele Ulisse L.

"I'll write down my story for this unreal time"

ROME – Sometimes it happens to meet History. Outside the museums too. Bob Dylan is there, he comes in the room dressed up like a gentleman of the old West. Black and grey. He's aged, obviously, but time softened the face, that today is more ironic, asymmetric, wise than it was time ago. He sits in front of us on the suite's sofa with a kind expression, but he is frightened, perplexed to the idea of something that is not usual to him, in spite of all these years of music: to talk about himself. Every wrinkle tell a decade, but in the middle of that face shaded by untidy curls there are two blue eyes incredibly big and attentive, flashing like the windows of a big mind that works tirelessly. Dylan open himself, he succeeds even to smile. Perhaps his it's a true and real rebirth.

GC: There are many books about you. Did you read them?
BD: I stop reading after Shelton's biography was published. It's difficult to read about ourselves because in your own mind things never happen that way. Everything looks fictitious.
GC: Weren't you tempted to write about yourself?
BD: Yes… I'm doing it really.
GC: Do you think now it's the right moment to reflect on your past, or were you preparing this book since many years?
BD: I think that what I'm writing was lookin' for the way to come out for a long time, it's not a past history for my wear and tear.
GC: In "Love & Theft" songs there are lines that could seem autobiographical…
BD: Probably, I can't see how it could be otherwise… But there's nothing premeditated. Many of these lyrics have been written in a sort of stream of consciousness. It doesn't happen to me to sit down at a table and meditate about every single line.
GC: Do you fear someone else's analysis?
BD: No, I don't know what people can find in what I do. Or else you mean Freudian kind analysis, or idealistic or Marxist? I have absolutely no idea.
GC: Once you wrote: "The future for me is already a thing of the past".
BD: I told it for everyone. Am I not the voice of a generation? I tell it for every of us.
GC: Live on stage you often sing old songs like *Song to Woody*. Is this something more than an abstract relationship with the past?
BD: It's because I'm happy to have written that song. Beyond everything, Woody Guthrie remains a phenomenal performer. He's like Charlie Parker, Hank Williams or others of the same prestige.
GC: Beh, not even your songs can be considered a simple background sound.
BD: No, all my songs are singable. They are current. This is iron age, but there was something else once and we can still perceive it. If you walk in the streets of a city like Rome, you realize that there was people here before you and perhaps they were on highest level than the one we can be.
GC: Do you feel the influence of some poets?
BD: I don't study really much the poetry.
GC: But are you in search of new writers/authors?

BD: Yes; but I don't believe there are, because we live in another age. Media are very much intrusive. What can you think to write that is not seen every day on newspapers or on TV?

GC: But there are emotions that must be expressed.

BD: Yes, but media move people's emotion anyway. When there were people like William Blake, Shelley or Baron, probably there wasn't any kind of media, just bulletins. You could feel yourself free to put down everything you had in your mind.

GC: Don't you feel free when you write?

BD: As I said, I'm not used to sit down and write. My lines go in the songs and those have a fixed structure and they must adapt to a precise idiom. They aren't free forms, there's no way to throw inside ideological stuff. You can't do it in a song.

GC: Nevertheless you did.

BD: If it happened, it did de facto but I never started with this intention. Perhaps someone else do it, not me.

GC: Do you think that TV and media killed poetry?

BD: Oh, absolutely. Because literature is written for readers. Nobody is like Kafka, and he sits writing something without wishing that someone read it.

GC: Every of the writers?

BD: Yes, certain, but media do this for everyone. You can't see things more horrible than the ones media propose. The news show to the people all the things that they could not even dream and the thoughts that they think to can suppress. So what can a writer do if every idea is already exposed by media before he can pick and evolve it?

GC: How do you react to all this?

BD: We live in science fiction in which Disney won, Disney science fiction. Everything is science fiction. For this reason I say that if a writer has something to tell, he absolutely got to. This a real world. Science fiction become the real world. We realize it or not.

GC: In a written of your, you talked of contemporary world as a new darkness age.

BD: Stone age, put down in this way. We talk of the gold age, that I believe is Homer's one, then we have had a silver age, and then a bronze age, and there's an heroic age somewhere. Then we have that we call iron age, but it could be stone age.

GC: Perhaps the silicon age?

BD: Oh yes (laughs) **that's right.**

GC: There are changes in your career. One of these happened in the middle of sixties, after *Blonde on Blonde*, when you had the motorbike crash. Later *John Wesley Harding* came out, and many people that was a different Dylan. It was "love and peace" time, and the album was completely different from the rest. Was the accident to make you change?

BD: It's difficult to me know when I took a decision consciously or not. But obviously in that period I had no much desire to go out and play. I didn't feel myself part of that culture.

GC: Springsteen told once that Elvis had freed the body and Dylan the mind.

BD: Did he tell so? It's good to be freed from anything… All of us should think so.

GC: Don't you believe there's a sort of religious feeling among your hardcore fans?

BD: I don't think there are hardcore fans. There are few people that we see at many concerts… and which kind of religion should be theirs? Which kind of sacrifices do they make and toward who? If they do so it's true that we have religious hardcore fans and then I'd like to know where and when they make sacrifices, because I'd like to be there too.

GC: You wrote a novel, *Tarantula* once. Didn't you feel a contrast with the music?

BD: Things in that period ran wildly: I never had intention to write a book. I had a manager and someone asked him: he writes all that songs, what else does he write? Books perhaps? And probably he answered: of course, sure that he writes books, or better, we're going to publish one. I think this was one of those circumstances in which he arranged everything and so I got to write the book. He often did. Once he proposed me

as an actor in a show, and I had no information at all 'til the day it happened. I thought I got to sing. These things happened in the old times of last century.

GC: There have been phases in your life that you consider difficult?

BD: There have been many for sure. There are strange moments, when you got to assume a different character to survive.

GC: In which moment, in which years?

BD: Fundamentally it is necessary to subdue your own ambitions depended upon what you need to be.

GC: Which kind of ambitions?

BD: It's exactly someone needs to discover.

GC: Someone says that you're happier on your bus that you use to go on tour, rather than in one of your 17 houses. Is it so?

BD: Beh, the bus is fairly sumptuous now. Considering how I feel when I'm at home, I can't say not to feel at home everywhere. I don't wish something that isn't what I have at the present moment in front of me.

GC: Did your son Jacob listened to the new album?

BD: I believe he has had from one of his brother. But I'm not sure, I've been traveling since a long time.

GC: How is to be Dylan today? Easier than in the past?

BD: I'm not the right person to ask to. It's a philosophical question for matters of philosophical order.

GC: You declared that you don't love to relisten the past things. But doesn't this autobiographical forces you to do it?

BD: I'm just watching everything from a new point of view. Many things go from a point to another without there's a reason. Why did they happen, could they happen the same if something else hadn't happened? And if they seemed so bad at the moment, why took they to a benefit on the long-term?
I like to write it. But I'm not scrupulous at all.

GC: Thinkin' about yours 43 albums, which is the one you feel has had more success from your personal point of view?

BD: Success? I never listen to them really! I'm sure all them have had success in their own way and in their own way they failed too.

GC: Nevertheless there must be some album that you consider better than others.

BD: I don't listen to them because I don't think that the songs have been perfected. I often thought hadn't been well recorded, or not in the way I listened to in my head at least. Six or seven months later the song was released as it was, by people that I trusted in. Someone asked me, how can you be so a bad judge of your material, you don't choose the best things. I don't know who can judge what is better, I don't judge material, I like to insert some things rather. It happened with the album Time out of mind. It wasn't recorded particularly well, but luckily it wasn't released immediately, and I had the chance to record it again. But it couldn't been happen some years ago.

GC: There's no producer for this album. Why?

BD: When you work with a producer, you know that he can lead you in this or in that direction if you aren't especially resolute. Many of my albums have been altered. Producer and technicians are often captured by the myth. They don't think how my things should really have to play. When I play live people say: but the songs don't play as in the album. Obviously not, just because they weren't recorded in the right way.

GC: In the new album your voice seems more dark than usual.

BD: I think that it's never been recorded in a more accurate way. I don't think to have sung better than in the past.

GC: Do you think it's difficult to record your voice?

BD: No I don't. Even if it seems to me that nobody never understood it. For the new album I found a young technician that understood (how to do it)**. I don't need effects or tricks.**

The matter is that my voice goes up and down, it's irregular, and it subverts classic systems of recording. But I actually think that the right way is the easiest one. Just an analogical recording, realistic.

GC: Do you think that there are prejudices about some voices as yours and Lou Reed or Cohen's?

BD: I believe that Leonard's voice is easily intelligible because his vocal radium is bass and linear. Lou has his own way to sing and talk in the meantime. Recording shouldn't have to be a problem.

GC: It seems your public is growin' up. There are many young people that listen to your concerts, more than old fans?

BD: I don't think there many old fans. The matter is that my age people die, or change life. A certain point of life new problems start, family, children, other priorities in comparison with entertainment.

GC: Do you consider yourself as an entertainer?

BD: No, but I got to compare with entertainment world.

GC: Do you think to go to meet George Harrison?

BD: I'm in touch with him, but I have no time now. I'll do if I have the chance.

GC: Do you believe that the Traveling Wilburys band will have a reunion?

BD: Who can guess? It's difficult to say.

GC: When you go on stage have you in mind to whom are directing?

BD: Yes, I play for the people who is farthest in the stalls. I don't look to the people who is in front of me, because they're usually the people that I find in every concert. They like the concert anyway.

GC: After many years you still go around on stage. Someone defined this Never ending tour.

BD: It irritates me to hear talk about Never ending tour. Naturally every thing must end. Mortality is what joins every of us and makes us identical. Things must have an end.

GC: Do you often think about death?

BD: I wouldn't say often, but for sure it happens when people who are close to me die.

GC: And about your mortality?

BD: Beh, I can see myself in other people, this the way I can think about it. I don't think about it more than everyone does. As soon as a person comes in the world he's old enough to leave it.

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Press Conference (Italian coverage *La repubblica*, ver. 1)
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Interviewer: Gino Castaldo; Translation: David Flynn

Sometimes it happens that you meet history. Also outside the museum. Bob Dylan is there, he comes into the room dressed like a gentleman from the Old West. Black and Grey. He's got older, obviously, but time has softened his face. These days it's more ironic, asymmetrical, wiser than it was. He sits down opposite us on a sofa in the hotel suite with a courteous expression but he's frightened, puzzled, faced with something that's not familiar to him even after all these years of music: talking about himself. Every line on his face tells the story of a decade but in the centre of that face shadowed by untidy curls there are two pale-blue eyes, frighteningly large and attentive, flashing like the windows of a great mind that works unceasingly. Dylan opens up, he wants to talk, he even gets round to smiling. Maybe his is a true rebirth.

GC: There have been many books published about you. Have you read them?

BD: I stopped reading them after the Shelton biography. It's difficult to read about yourself because in your own mind things never happen in that way. It all seems like fiction.

GC: Have you ever been tempted to write about yourself?

BD: Yeah…to tell the truth I'm doing it.

GC: Do you think this is the right moment to reflect on your past, or have you been preparing this book for years?

BD: I think that what I'm writing has been trying to find its way out for some time now. It's not a story about the past for my own use.

GC: In the songs on *Love and Theft* there are phrases that could seem autobiographical.

BD: Probably, I don't see how it could be any other way…But there's nothing premeditated. Many of these lyrics were written in a sort of stream of consciousness. I never sit down at a table and meditate about every single verse.

GC: Do you worry about how other people will analyse them?

BD: No, I've got no idea what other people might discover in the things I produce. Or do you mean analysis like Freudian or Idealist or Marxist? I really have no idea.

GC: Once you wrote ' For me the future is a thing of the past '.

BD: I said it for everybody. Aren't I the spokesman for a generation? I speak for all of us.

GC: When you play live you often sing old songs, like *Song to Woody*. Is it more than just an abstract relationship with the past?

BD: It's because I'm happy to have written that song. Leaving everything aside, Woody Guthrie is a phenomenal performer. He's like Charlie Parker, Hank Williams or others of that stature.

GC: Your songs are hardly just background music...

BD: No, my songs are all singable. They're relevant. This is the Iron Age, but before there was something else and we can't conceive of it yet. If you walk around the streets of a city like Rome you realise that there were people before you and maybe they were on a higher level than we can ever reach.

GC: Are you influenced by some poets?

BD: To tell the truth I don't study poetry much.

GC: But you look out for new writers?

BD: Yeah, but I don't believe there are any, because we live in another age. The media is very invasive. What could you possibly write that you haven't seen every day in the newspapers or on television.

GC: But there are emotions that have to be expressed.

BD: Yeah, but the media control people's emotions, anyway. When there were people around like William Blake, Shelley or Byron there probably wasn't any form of media. Just gazzettes. You could feel free to put down whatever you had in your mind.

GC: Don't you feel free when you write?

BD: Like I said I'm not used to sitting down and writing. My words go into the songs and they've got a precise structure and they have to conform to a certain idiom. They're not free forms. There's no way you can put ideology inside. You can't do it with a song.

GC: Even though you've done it.

BD: If it happened it happened but I never set out with that intention. Maybe others do that but not me.

GC: Do you think the TV and the media have killed poetry?

BD: Oh, absolutely. Because literature is written for a public. There's nobody like Kafka who just sits down and writes something without wanting somebody to read it.

GC: Every writer?

BD: Yeah, sure, but the media does this for everybody. You can't see things that are more horrible than what the media give you. The news shows people things that they couldn't even dream about and even ideas that people thought they could repress, but they see them and they can't even repress them anymore. So what can a writer do when every idea is already exposed in the media before he can even grasp it and develop it.

GC: How do you react to all this?

BD: We live in a world of fantasy where Disney has won, the fantasy of Disney. It's all fantasy. That's why I think that if a writer has something to say he should say it at all costs. The world is real. Fantasy has become the real world. Whether we realise it or not.

GC: You have written that the modern world is a sort of new Dark Ages.

BD: The Stone Age, let's put it like that. We speak about the Golden Age which I believe would be that of Homer, then we had the Age of Silver and then the Bronze Age and there was a Heroic Age somewhere in there. Then we have what we call the Iron Age, but it could be the Stone Age.

GC: Maybe the Silicon Age?

BD: Oh, yeah (laughs)**, that's right.**

GC: There have been important changes in your career. One of these happened in the middle of the sixties after *Blonde on Blonde*, when you had the motorcycle accident. After some time *John Wesley Harding* came out and many people thought it was a different Dylan. It was the time of Love and Peace and the record was completely different from everything else. Was it the accident that changed things?

BD: It's difficult for me to know whether I made a conscious decision or not. But obviously at that time I had no great desire to go out and play music. I never felt that I was part of that culture.

GC: Springsteen once said that Elvis freed your body and Dylan freed your mind.

BD: He said that? To free mind? It's good to be freed from everything…We should all think like that.

GC: Don't you think there's a sort of religious feeling amongst your hard core fans?

BD: I don't think I've got a group of hard core fans. There are a few people that we see at many concerts…And then what religion would they have? What sacrifices do they make, and for who? If they do then okay we've got a hard core religious group and I'd like to know when and where they make those sacrifices because I'd like to be there, too.

GC: You once wrote a novel, Tarantula. Did you feel that was a contrast to the music?

BD: Things were happening wildly in that period. I never had any intention of writing a book. I had a manager who was asked: he writes all those songs, what else does he write? Maybe he writes books. And he must have replied: obviously, sure he writes books, in fact we're just about to publish one. I think it was on that occasion that he made the deal and then I had to write the book. He often did things like that. Once he set me up as an actor in a show and I knew nothing about it till the day it happened. I thought I was going to sing. These things happened in the old days…last century.

GC: Have there been what you would consider difficult phases in your life?

BD: Sure, there have been many. There are strange moments when you have to take on a new personality to survive.

GC: Which moment, which years?

BD: Basically you have to surpass your own ambitions in order to be who you need to be.

GC: What type of ambitions?

BD: That's exactly what you have to discover.

GC: Some people say you're happier on your bus when you're on tour than in any one of your 17 homes. Is that true?

BD: Well, the bus has become more or less luxurious now. If I think about how I feel at home I'd have to say that I feel at home wherever I am. I never want anything that isn't what I've got right in front of me at any given moment.

GC: Has your son Jacob heard the new record?

BD: I think he got it from one of his brothers or sisters. But I'm not sure, I've been traveling around for a long time.

GC: How does it feel to be Dylan today. Easier than in the past?

BD: I'm not the right person to ask. It's a philosophical question.

GC: You've said you don't like listening to things from the past doesn't this autobiography force you to do just that?

BD: I'm just looking at everything from a new point of view. Many things go from one point to another without there being a reason. Why did they happen, could they have happened if something else hadn't happened? And if they seemed so bad at the time why did they bring long term benefits? I like to write. But I'm certainly not meticulous.

GC: Thinking about your 43 records, which one do you think was the most successful from your point of view?

BD: Successful? To tell the truth I never listen to them! I'm sure they were all successful in their own way and I'm sure in their own way they were all failures.

GC: There must be records that you consider better than others, though.

BD: I don't listen to them because I don't think the songs were ever done perfectly. I often think a song wasn't recorded perfectly or at least not in the way I heard the song in my head. Six or seven months later the song would be released in the way it was. By people I had trusted. It happened too many times. I'm often asked how I can be such a bad judge of my own material, that I don't put the best things on the records. I don't know how anyone can judge which song is better than another. I don't judge the material, more or less I like to put anything on the record. It happened with *Time Out of Mind*. It wasn't recorded particularly well but luckily it wasn't released immediately so I was able to record it again from the start. But years ago that could never have happened.

GC: On the new album there's no producer. Why's that?

BD: When you work with a producer you know that he can take you in this direction or that direction if you're not particularly determined. Many of my records have been altered. Often the producer or the engineers are prisoners of the legend. They don't think about how my things should really sound. When I sing live people say: but the songs don't sound like they do on the record. Obviously not, also because they weren't recorded in the right way.

GC: On the new album your voice sounds darker than usual.

BD: I don't think it's ever been recorded in a more accurate way. I don't think I was singing better than in the past.

GC: Do you think it's difficult to record your voice?

BD: I don't think so. Even though it seems like nobody has ever understood. For the new record I found a young engineer who understood. I don't need special effects or tricks. The fact is that my voice goes up and down. It's irregular, and it subverts the classical recording systems. But I really think the right way is the most simple way. All you need is an analogue recording, realistic.

GC: Do you think there are preconceived ideas about certain voices like yours and Leonard Cohen's and Lou Reed's?

BD: I think Leonard's voice is easily understood because his vocal range is low and straightforward (lineare)**. Lou has his own way of singing and speaking at the same time. Recording them shouldn't be a problem.**

GC: It seems like your audience is growing. Are there many young people at your concerts along with your old fans?

BD: I don't think there are many old fans. The fact is that people of my age die, or change their lives. At a certain point in your life new problems arise. Family, children. priorities change, entertainment becomes less important.

GC: Do you consider yourself to be an entertainer?

BD: No, but I have to face up to the world of entertainment.

GC: Do you think you'll be going to visit George Harrison?

BD: I'm in contact with him, but at the moment I haven't got the time. If I have the possibility then I will.

GC: Do you think The Traveling Wilburys where you were together with Harrison could come back?

BD: Who can say? It's difficult to know.

GC: When you're on stage do you have in your mind any idea of who you're relating to?

BD: Yeah, I'm playing for the people who are furthest away. I don't look at the people near me because it's usually the people who you see at every concert. They'll enjoy the concert in any case.

GC: After many years you're still on tour. Some people call it The Never Ending Tour.

BD: It annoys me when I hear people talking about The Never Ending Tour. Obviously everything must finish. That which ties everyone together and which makes everyone equal is our mortality. Everything must come to an end.

GC: Do you think about death often?

BD: I wouldn't say often but it certainly happens when people who are close to me die.

GC: And about your own mortality?

BD: Well, I can see myself in other people, that's the way you can think about it. I don't think about it any more than everybody else. As soon as you enter this world you're old enough to leave it.

10 September 2001
Edna Gundersen Interview for *USA Today*

DYLAN IS POSITIVELY ON TOP OF HIS GAME
By Edna Gundersen, USA TODAY

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — It's been a hard reign for music's unruly ruler, who's weathered mutinous waves from disco to techno, Muzak to metal and sock hops to hip-hop. Enthroned in myth for nearly 40 years, Bob Dylan remains firmly empowered by his own rebel nature and artistic drive. **"From the start, I had an extreme sense of destiny,"** he says. Its newest manifestation is *Love and Theft*, due Tuesday. His 43rd album follows 1997's *Time Out of Mind*, a haunting meditation on mortality that won three Grammys, including album of the year.

Confounding expectations, *Love and Theft* straddles future and past in a radical reinvention of pre-war American song styles that's garnering raves unrivaled since his early classics. *Rolling Stone* bestowed five stars, the first perfect score for a new album since 1992's touting of R.E.M.'s *Automatic for the People*.

Dylanologists won't need decoder rings to decipher the bard's candid expressions about heartbreak and human foibles on accessible tunes aimed squarely at the hoi polloi. The unsavory duo on *Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum*, heard in Dylan's first-ever television ad (airing on networks this week), conveys the nature of wickedness in modern times.

"That evil might not be coming your way as a monstrous brute or the gun-toting devilish ghetto gangster," Dylan says. **"It's the bookish-looking guy in wire-rimmed glasses who might not be entirely harmless."**

"I've never recorded an album with more autobiographical songs," he says. "**This is the way I really feel about things. It's not me dragging around a bottle of absinthe and coming up with Baudelairian poems. It's me using everything I know to be true."**

A notorious sphinx, Dylan is positively forthcoming during a 90-minute interview in his beachside hotel suite. Animated and assertive, he laughs easily. He's rock-star slim and sports a Vincent Price moustache, black cowboy boots and that familiar wiry mop, now shot with gray.

Fresh off a summer tour, he's sipping coffee and waxing philosophic about his place in the polar extremes of music and business.

"To me, music either expresses ideas of liberty, or it's made under the oppression of dictatorship," he says. **"The only stuff I've heard that has that freedom is traditional Anglo-American music. That's all I know. That's all I've ever known. I was fortunate to come up at a time when the last of it existed. It doesn't exist anymore."**

Dismayed by the "rootless" nature of current pop music, Dylan listens primarily to archaic recordings and ignores even the Dylan-esque clones that litter his wake.

"People who came after me, I don't feel, were ever my peers or contemporaries, because they didn't really have any standing in traditional music," he says. **"They didn't play folk songs. They heard me and thought, 'Oh, this guy writes his own songs, I can do that.' They can, of course, but those songs don't have any resonance."**

While Dylan resonates in countless musical movements, his presence in pop culture waned midcareer and didn't rebound until the lauded *Time Out of Mind* unleashed innumerable hosannas and awards. While he shrugs off most accolades and the press hoopla surrounding his 60th birthday in May (**"I stopped counting at 40"**), he confesses to a giddy thrill in winning the Oscar for *Wonder Boys* theme *Things Have Changed*.

"In all honesty, if I hadn't won, it probably would have devastated me a little bit," he says. **"That's like the Pulitzer Prize of the entertainment world."**

And yet Dylan is grateful the publicity machines stopped stalking him a decade ago.

"In the early '90s, the media lost track of me, and that was the best thing that could happen," he says. **"It was crucial, because you can't achieve greatness under media scrutiny. You're never allowed to be less than your legend. When the media picked up on me again five or six years later, I'd fully developed into the performer I needed to be and was in a position to go any which way I wanted. The media will never catch up again. Once they let you go, they cannot get you back. It's metaphysical. And it's not good enough to retreat. You have to be considered irrelevant."**

Dylan's creative resurgence and a near-fatal heart infection in 1997 renewed interest in his well-shrouded private life, prompting publication this year of two biographies airing personal and sometimes unflattering details of his past. Dylan is less irritated by the books than their shady sources seeking money or glory.

"People tend to ingratiate themselves with other people by passing along information," he says. **"I have the same feeling about them that Sherman and Lee had about people hanging around their tents. They're spies. All informers should be shot. A person should not rat on anybody. It's a principle I adhere to."**

Regarding one author's disclosure of Dylan's marriage to background singer Carolyn Dennis from 1986 to 1990, Dylan chuckles and blurts, **"I've been married a bunch of times! I mean, I've never tried to hide that. I just don't advertise my life. I write songs, I play on stage, and I make records. That's it. The rest is not anybody's business."**

Fans will have an opportunity to read Dylan's **"take on people who've had takes on me"** in *Chronicles*, a series of memoirs to be published by Simon & Schuster. So far, he's penned about 100 pages of recollections about his folk launch in New York for the inaugural volume, due next year.

Though loath in the past to correct the record, Dylan is less reticent about addressing specific misconceptions. Family matters remain off limits. Asked about the *Lonesome Day Blues* line *"I wish my mother was still alive,"* he declines to discuss her death last year, except to say, **"Even to talk about my mother just breaks me up."**

He's more willing to explain his artistic motives, particularly the overly scrutinized lyrics that beguile scholars.

"Unfortunately, people have been led down the wrong path by quasi-intellectuals who never really get the cultural spirit in the air when these songs are performed," he says.

Masters of War, for instance, **"is supposed to be a pacifistic song against war. It's not an anti-war song. It's speaking against what Eisenhower was calling a military industrial complex as he was making his exit from the presidency. That spirit was in the air, and I picked it up. People focus on the senators and congressmen in *The Times They Are A-Changin'* but never the Nietzschean aspects. The spirit of 'God is dead' was in the air, but Nietzsche was the son of a bourgeois pastor. That turns the rationale on its head. And *Desolation Row*? That's a minstrel song through and through. I saw some ragtag minstrel show in blackface at the carnivals when I was growing up, and it had an effect on me, just as much as seeing the lady with four legs."**

While his disciples continue to scour early prose for hidden meanings, Dylan remains focused on his current agenda. He recently authorized producers to construct a stage production around selected Dylan compositions. An arena tour kicks off Oct. 5 in Spokane, Wash. A live set may be recorded and released by next year. A handful of partially sketched songs could yield a new album within two years. He's unsure about the status of further reissues but says plenty of previously unreleased material remains in vaults.

He's not slowing down or eyeing retirement. Aside from disrupting a tour, the health scare in 1997 did little to hamper Dylan's momentum and left no lasting physical or psychological scars.

"That's gone. It happens, and you wonder why. It's not like I needed to get off my feet or take refuge to think about my life. It was just a painful experience. If it had been diagnosed correctly right away, you would have never heard about it. But I was in a lot of pain and

couldn't get any correct readings on what was the matter with me until it was nearly too late."

Dylan was stricken while on tour. He contracted pericarditis during a springtime motorcycle ride along the muddy banks of the Ohio River after a week of heavy rain. As the air grew thick with brown dust, he stopped to tie a bandana over his mouth.

"People who live there are immune and go indoors when it happens," he says. **"I thought, this heavy pollution is strange. You couldn't see five feet ahead of you. We played that night and moved on."**

Play and move on. That mantra continues to sustain Dylan as he enters his fifth decade as an icon, enigma, influence and, most important, working musician.

"How do I see my future?" he muses. **"I don't."**

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Robert Hilburn interview for *Los Angeles Times*, Santa Monica

Source: *Los Angeles Times* online

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HOW DOES IT FEEL? DON'T ASK

A creatively rejuvenated Bob Dylan won't discuss his life or his lyrics. The state of pop music is another matter.

By ROBERT HILBURN

"Five stars!"

Those are Bob Dylan's first words as I step into his Santa Monica hotel suite to talk about his new album, "Love and Theft."

"That's what Rolling Stone gave the new album. How many artists have you interviewed in the last 15 years that have gotten a five-star review?"

Thinking he's putting me on, I reply, **"Well, you're not getting five stars in The Times."**

Silence.

I quickly explain that we have a four-star rating system.

Could the most acclaimed songwriter of the modern pop era really care about a single review? I can't even imagine him being excited about winning a Grammy, or an Oscar, as he did earlier this year for "*Things Have Changed*" from "*Wonder Boys*."

"Wouldn't you be excited if you won a Pulitzer Prize?" he replies.

It's a quintessential Dylan moment. Every time you think you have him figured out, he taunts you with his elusiveness.

For 40 years, he has been a man of constant change who weaves conviction and contradictions into his work with artful sleight-of-hand.

On "*Love and Theft*," which received a four-star review last Sunday in *The Times* and was released Tuesday, there are still moments of struggle and confusion. But those sentiments are accompanied—often in the same song—by moments of disarming wit (including a goofy knock-knock joke) and jubilant optimism, when the gods seem lined up on his side.

The message of "*Love and Theft*," however, is as much in the arrangements as the lyrics. Dylan's musical compass has always been tied to the country, blues and folk sounds that thrilled him as a youngster in Minnesota, and he and his dazzling road band play with the defiance of true believers who feel pop music has been taken over by charlatans.

In the alternating gentle and wailing instrumentation, Dylan pulls us back to the start of rock n' roll, reminds us of the innocence and energy of the times and, in the process, challenges those who feel that rock is exhausted as an art form.

You won't get Dylan to admit that in an interview, but he hints at it. As always, he resists questions about his personal life and the meaning of particular lines or songs, but he speaks passionately about his legacy and his musical roots. Ever the extremist, Dylan is guilty of underestimating some of today's rock and hip-hop acts, but his views are as provocative as his lyrics in "*Love and Theft*."

Dylan, 60, is working on his autobiography, but you wonder if he'll really step from behind the veil even there. He's already hinting the events in the book may be a bit fuzzy. **"My retrievable memory isn't as good as it should be,"** he says with only the barest trace of a smile.

RH: The music on the new album seems transported from a different era. Do you find much inspiration in today's music scene?

BD: I know there are groups at the top of the charts that are hailed as the saviors of rock n' roll and all that, but they are amateurs. They don't know where the music comes from... I was lucky. I came up in a different era. There were these great blues and country and folk artists around, and the impulse to play [those sounds] **came to me at a very early age.**

I wouldn't even think about playing music if I was born in these times. I wouldn't even listen to the radio. I'm an extreme person. I'm not a party boy. I don't care about rave dances and a lot of the stuff going on.

RH: What do you think would have interested you today if music weren't an option?

BD: I'd probably turn to something like mathematics. That would interest me. Architecture would interest me. Something like that.

RH: Are you surprised by the return of so much placid pop—which was one of the original targets of rock 'n' roll?

BD: I don't think what we call pop music today is any worse than it was. We never liked pop music. It never occurred to me [in the '50s] **that Bing Crosby was on the cutting edge 20 years before I was listening to him. I never heard that Bing Crosby. The Louis Armstrong I heard was the guy who sang "Hello, Dolly!" I never heard him do "West End Blues."**

RH: "*Time Out of Mind*" seemed to spark a creative resurgence for you. Did you know right away it was something special?

BD: It was a little sketchy to me. I knew after that record that when and if I ever committed myself to making another record, I didn't want to get caught short without up-tempo songs. A lot of my songs are slow ballads. I can gut-wrench a lot out of them. But if you put a lot of them on a record, they'll fade into one another, and there was some of that in "*Time Out of Mind*." I sort of blueprinted it this time to make sure I didn't get caught without up-tempo songs.

If you hear any difference on this record—why it might flow better—it's because as soon as an up-tempo song comes over, then it's slowed down, then back up again. There's more pacing.

RH: What about the creative process for you? Do you write constantly?

BD: I overwrite. If I know I am going in to record a song, I write more than I need. In the past that's been a problem because I failed to use discretion at times. I have to guard against that. On this album, "Lonesome Day Blues" was twice as long at one point. "Highlands" [a 17-minute song on "Time Out of Mind"] **was twice as long originally.**

RH: Why is there so much humor on the album this time? Does it have to do with your state of mind these days?

BD: I try to make the songs as three-dimensional as possible. A one- or two-dimensional song doesn't last very long. It's important to have humor where you can. Even the most severe rapper uses some humor.

RH: When do you tend to do the most writing? When you're on tour or when you're home for a few weeks?

BD: I don't know. Some things just come to me in dreams. But I can write a bunch of stuff down after you leave... about, say, the way you are dressed. I look at people as ideas. I don't look at them as people. I'm talking about general observation. Whoever I see, I look at them as an idea... what this person represents. That's the way I see life. I see life as a utilitarian thing. Then you strip things away until you get to the core of what's important.

RH: Did you have much interest in the 2000 Bush-Gore campaign?

BD: Did I follow the election? Yeah, I followed to see who would win. But in the larger scheme of things, the government is irrelevant. Everybody, everything can be bought and sold.

RH: Isn't that pretty pessimistic for someone who everyone thought was so optimistic and inspiring in the '60s?

BD: I'm not sure people understood a lot of what I was writing about. I don't even know if I would understand them if I believed everything that has been written about them by imbeciles who wouldn't know the first thing about writing songs. I've always said the organized media propagated me as something I never pretended to be... all this spokesman of conscience thing. A lot of my songs were definitely misinterpreted by people who didn't know any better, and it goes on today.

RH: Give me an example of a song that has been widely misinterpreted.

BD: Take "*Masters of War*." Every time I sing it, someone writes that it's an antiwar song. But there's no antiwar sentiment in that song. I'm not a pacifist. I don't think I've ever been one. If you look closely at the song, it's about what Eisenhower was saying about the dangers of the military-industrial complex in this country. I believe strongly in everyone's right to defend themselves by every means necessary.

RH: But there surely was a lot of idealism in the country and in your songs in the '60s.

BD: Well, you are affected as a writer and a person by the culture and spirit of the times. I was tuned into it then, I'm tuned into it now. None of us are immune to the spirit of the age. It affects us whether we know it or whether we like it or not. There's some of today's cultural spirit on this record.

I think something changed in the country around 1966 or so. You'll have to look at the history books to really sort it out, but there are people who manipulated the Vietnam War. They were traitors to America, whoever they were. It was the beginning of the corporate takeover of America.

RH: How would you describe the spirit of the '50s and the '60s?

BD: I knew it was an unsettled, rebellious spirit.

RH: How about today?

BD: I don't really know. I am not a forecaster of the times. But if we're not careful, we'll wake up in a multinational, multiethnic police state—not that America can't reverse itself. Whoever invented America were the greatest minds we've ever seen, and [people] who understand what the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights are all about will come to the forefront sooner or later.

RH: What was it like to be adored at times and booed at others—like on the "*Slow Train Coming*" tour in the 70s?

BD: I was booed at Newport before that, remember. You can't worry about things like that. Miles Davis has been booed. Hank Williams was booed. Stravinsky was booed. You're nobody if you don't get booed sometime.

RH: Does that affect you as an artist? Does it make you either ease up or dig in?

BD: It depends on what kind of artist you are. There are superficial artists, natural artists and supernatural artists.

RH: How do you define them?

BD: A natural artist is someone who just takes what talent they have and displays it night after night on stage, doing the best they can within [accepted] **limits. A superficial artist is someone who shouldn't be up there in the first place because they've really got nothing to tell you.**

RH: And the supernatural?

BD: That's someone who goes deep, and the deeper they go, the more buried gods they'll find.

RH: How would you describe yourself?

BD: [Laughs.] **I really should apply this to other people rather than myself. I'm not sure where I fit. You can call me any one of those. But I always felt that if I'm going to do anything in life, I want to go as deep as I can.**

RH: Have you always lived up to that goal? Have you ever felt you were just a superficial artist?

BD: Sure, I think the tour I did with the Band in 1974 was superficial. I had forgotten how to sing and play. I had been devoting my time to raising a family, and it took me a long

time to recapture my purpose as a performer. You'd find it at times, then it would disappear again for a while.

RH: You're on a creative roll now. Where do you see the beginning of it?

BD: In the early '90s when I escaped the organized media. They let me be. They considered me irrelevant, which was the best thing that could have happened to me. I was waiting for that. No artist can develop for any length of time in the light of the media, no matter who it is. If the media was commenting on every article you wrote, imagine what it would do to you.

RH: Do you worry that the latest rash of awards and acclaim will make the media start focusing on you again?

BD: No, that time has passed. Once they move away and lose track of you, they'll never catch up with you again. They're off searching for someone new to put a label on.

RH: Do you see yourself touring indefinitely?

BD: I don't see myself doing anything indefinitely. I see myself fulfilling the commitments at the moment. Anything beyond that, time will have to tell.

RH: So, how do you feel personally? There's a lot of spirit in the new album. Do you feel pretty good about things?

BD: Any day above the ground is a good day.

Robert Hilburn, The Times' pop music critic, can be reached at robert.hilburn@latimes.com.

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Christopher John Farley Interview for *Time* Magazine

The grand old man of rock's latest album adds a rockingly good chapter to the
LEGEND OF DYLAN
By CHRISTOPHER JOHN FARLEY

Bob Dylan is flipping through his own back pages. He has finally started writing an autobiography. It began as liner notes for rereleases of his back-catalog albums; he has finished about 200 pages, or perhaps 150—he's not exactly certain. **"My retrievable memory, it goes blank on incidents and things that have happened,"** says Dylan. He has trouble, sometimes, remembering events from decades past, when he was conjuring up albums like *Highway 61 Revisited* and unleashing songs like *Maggie's Farm*. So he is collecting anecdotes about himself that other people have told and weaving them into his narrative. Here's the touch that's pure Dylan: even if he knows a tale isn't factual, if it sounds good, he'll use it anyway. **"I'll take some of the stuff that people think is true,"** he says, **"and I'll build a story around that."**

Here's one story that is true: Dylan is back. Not sort of back, making music that starstruck critics feel compelled to applaud just because Dylan's the guy who plugged in at Newport, or because he's the visionary who wrote *Like a Rolling Stone*, or even because he's the man who first declared that *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. He's all the way back—so far back he's up front—once again making music that's worth talking about, not because of what he did 10,000 yesterdays ago but because of what he's doing today. His new album, *Love and Theft* (Columbia), his 43rd release, is charged with rollickingly good music and enlivened with some of the best lyrics Dylan has spun out in decades.

The story goes like this: a '60s icon, a touring firebrand in the '70s, slows to a grind in the late '80s and, amid reports of his drinking too much and caring too little, loses all touch with his muse in the early '90s. Then comes the acclaimed album *Time Out of Mind* in 1997, a Grammy in 1998 (his first for best album), an Oscar for best song (another first) in 2001 and worldwide celebration and plaudits on the occasion of his 60th birthday, which took place on May 24 of this year. **"Well, you know, I stopped counting after 40,"** says Dylan. **"I'm sure you would too."** He says he has got past the heart ailment he had in 1997, and is feeling fit. He adds, smiling, **"A day above the ground is a good day."**

But that's just part of the story. The tale could have ended like this: it was 1987 and Dylan was about to embark on a tour with the Grateful Dead when he decided to quit the music business. At that point, he had been mailing in his performances for years; he had even hired backup singers to distract audiences from the tired ruin of his voice: He couldn't even remember the lyrics to his best, most challenging songs, like *Desolatian Row* and *Queen Jane Approximately*; what's more, he didn't want to remember them. **"I'd become a different person since I'd written them,"** Dylan recalls, **"and, frankly, they mystified me."** The members of the Grateful Dead, however, loved the old songs and wanted to play some of them with Dylan. The realization that he had grown so estranged from his art drove Dylan to despair. **"At that point, I was just going to get out of it and everything that entails,"** he says.

Then came an epiphany. He was in California with the Dead, practicing for the tour, when he saw a group of younger performers in a club. They were playing middle-of-the-road jazz standards, but they had a youthful energy. Says Dylan: **"I suddenly realized, you know, years ago when I was young, whenever it was that I started out, I knew these kind of guys."** He resolved to reconnect to his music. A few not-so-great albums followed, such as *World Gone Wrong*; but eventually Dylan found his path and released *Time Out of Mind*, and now *Love and Theft*. The end.

If this sounds a little apocryphal, that's part of the story too since Dylan—born Robert Allen Zimmerman in Duluth, Minn.—has revised and reinvented his past from the very start of

his career. On *Summer Days*, a track from *Love and Theft*, he sings, "*She says, 'you can't repeat the past.' I say, 'you can't? What do you mean, you can't? Of course you can!'*" Dylan talks like he sings, in that ancient lilting rasp, stressing unexpected syllables, mesmerizing with folky cadences, loping along somewhere between conversation and caterwauling. All the compositions on *Love and Theft* are autobiographical, he says. **"Yeah, all of 'em. Every single one, every line. It's completely autobiographical, as most of my stuff usually is on one level or another."**

Indeed, *Love and Theft* is an album of memories, of old genres and antique grooves. The songs have a sense of history and a sense of discovery; hearing them is like finding a stack of vintage records in an old uncle's attic. The opening track, *Tweedle Dee & Tweedle Dum*, churns to a boogie-woogie-ish beat; the radiant *Moonlight* evokes Tin Pan Alley crooning and Western swing; and on the song *High Water*, Dylan pays tribute to blues pioneer Charley Patton. **"All my songs, the styles I work in, were all developed before I was born,"** says Dylan. **"When I came into the world, that spirit of things was still very strong. Billie Holiday was still alive. Duke Ellington. All those old blues singers were still alive. And I met and played with many of them. I learned a whole bunch of stuff from them. And that was the music that was dear to me. I was never really interested in pop music."**

While the lyrics on *Time Out of Mind* are stark and dreary (the first line on the album is "*I'm walking through streets that are dead*"), the lyrics on *Love and Theft* are vibrant and visionary, loose-limbed and jokey. On *Cry a While*, Dylan actually uses the phrase "*booty call*"; on *Po' Boy*, he tells a knock-knock joke. On Mississippi, he summons up his old outsider spirit, singing, "*I was raised in the country, I been workin' in the town / I been in trouble ever since I set my suitcase down.*" But on *Summer Days*, he acknowledges that things have changed for the old rebel icon: "*Well I'm drivin' in the flats in a cadillac car/ the girls all say, 'you're a worn-out a star.'*" Says Dylan: **"I heard somebody say that to me."**

Dylan's relationships with women have often been the subject of scrutiny, a both in his lyrics and in the media. "*There ain't no limit to the amount of trouble women bring,*" he sings on *Sugar Baby*, the last track on *Love and Theft*. In 1977 he went through a messy divorce from his first wife, Sara Lowndes. (One of their five children, Jakob, has gone on to become a rock star with his band the Wallflowers.) A book that came out this year, *Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan* by Howard Sounes, revealed that in 1986, Dylan had a child with one of his backup singers, Carolyn Dennis, and later married her. Although they are divorced, Dylan says he never tried to conceal the relationship. **"It's not private to me,"** he says. **"I've never tried to hide anything. I mean, not that I know of. I don't have any skeletons that I don't want anybody to see."** Speaking about Dennis publicly for the first time, he says she is **"a fantastic singer. She's a gospel singer mainly. One of her uncles was Blind Willie Johnson. What more do you need to know about somebody?"** Dylan's daughter with Dennis is in her teens and apparently doesn't share her father's musical tastes. Says Dylan: **"I get in fights with her if I talk about music."**

Dylan, in fact, hates most modern music. **"The radio makes hideous sounds,"** he says. He thinks Beck, the folk/rock/hip-hop singer-songwriter who is often compared with him, should focus: **"you just can't be that good at everything you touch."** He hasn't really listened to Eminem's work-when it comes to rap, he prefers the Roots—but he says, **"I almost feel like if anything is controversial, the guy's gotta be doing something right."** Among the few contemporary acts that excite him is jazz singer Cassandra Wilson. **"She is one of my favorite singers today,"** says Dylan. **"I heard her version of *Death Letter Blues*—gave me the chills. I love everything she does."** He says he would like to see her cover some of his songs.

Meanwhile, the old man is doing just fine performing his own work. He plays about 120 dates a year, and in recent years his shows have become stronger than they have been in decades. His set lists change as constantly as the weather, and his live song interpretations often differ radically from their recorded versions. Dylan is wandering around his history, making changes as he sees fit. The veteran folk-rocker says his inspiration comes directly from God. **"I've had a God-given sense of destiny,"** says Dylan. **"This is what I was put on earth to**

do. Just like Shakespeare was gonna write his plays, the Wright Brothers were gonna invent an airplane, like Edison was gonna invent a telephone, I was put here to do this. I knew I was gonna do it better than anybody ever did it." Well, actually, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. But who says you can't remake the past?

27 September 2001
David Fricke interview for *Rolling Stone*

Source: *Rolling Stone* as reprinted in *ISIS* #99, Oct/Nov 2001, p. 34.

The Making of Dylan's "Love and Theft"
By David Fricke

At about 3:30 p.m. every day for two weeks Dylan arrived at a recording studio in midtown Manhattan and went straight to work. Dylan was making "Love and Theft," his first studio album in four years. "And it was work," says organist and accordion player Augie Meyers. "Bob would walk in, have all his papers there and go, **'Let's try this in** [the key of] **C.'**

"There was none of this 'Hi, what's happening?' and a bit of BS," says the Texas-born Meyers, 61, who played in the Sir Douglas Quintet and has known Dylan since the 1960s. "It was, 'OK, let's go to work.' After we were through, at ten o'clock at night, it seemed like we'd only been there a couple of hours, because it was so much fun. Every day was a special day, because every day was a new song."

"Love and Theft" is vastly different in tone and atmosphere from "Time Out of Mind," even though both records feature Dylan's group. The latter was produced by Daniel Lanois with an emphasis on shadows and foreboding. Dylan, in turn, produced "Love and Theft" (under an alias, Jack Frost) with a focus on vocal melodies and the interplay of Campbell and Sexton's guitars. Combining incisive reflection and complex narrative with sprawling, guitar-enriched Americana – jump blues, rockabilly, mountain balladry and saloon croon – Dylan has made one of the most jubilant and compelling records of his career. Asked why he recut "Mississippi" for "Love and Theft" and produced the album himself, Dylan replies–

"If you had heard the original recording, you'd see in a second. The song was pretty much laid out intact melodically, lyrically and structurally, but Lanois didn't see it. Thought it was pedestrian. Took it down the Afro-polyrhythm route-multirhythm drumming, that sort of thing. Polyrhythm has its place, but it doesn't work for knifelike lyrics trying to convey majesty and heroism.

"Maybe we had worked too hard on other things, I can't remember." Dylan continues, **"but Lanois can get passionate about what he feels to be true. He's not above smashing guitars. I never cared about that unless it was one of mine. Things got contentious once in the parking lot. He tried to convince me that the song had to be 'sexy, sexy and more sexy.' I know about sexy, too. He reminded me of Sam Phillips, who had once said the same thing to John Prine about a song, but the circumstances were not similar. I tried to explain that the song had more to do with the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights than witch doctors, and just couldn't be thought of as some kind of ideological voodoo thing. But he had his own way of looking at things, and in the end I had to reject this because I thought too highly of the expressive meaning behind the lyrics to bury them in some steamy cauldron of drum theory. On the performance you're hearing, the bass is playing a triplet beat, and that adds up to all the multirhythm you need, even in a slow-tempo song. I think Lanois is an excellent producer, though."**

Amazingly, Dylan did much of his writing for "Love and Theft" on the spot, at the sessions. Dylan, says Meyers, would "fool around for a while with a song, then we'd cut it. And he'd say, **'I think I'm gonna write a couple more verses,'** sit down and write five more verses. Each verse had six or eight lines. It's complicated stuff, and he was doing it right there."

The songs, Meyers adds, were mostly recorded live, including Dylan's vocals. "Bob don't like to overdub much," Meyers notes. "He would overdub some acoustic guitars, put some mandolin and fiddle on there. Sometimes he'd overdub his voice. If he messed up [a vocal], he'd overdub a word or two."

The band that recorded "Love and Theft" has known one another for decades. "We're all family at this point," Meyers notes. Sexton and Clay (?) were childhood friends; Campbell played with Meyers and Sir Douglas Quintet leader Doug Sahm back in the 1970s. And Dylan was a frequent visitor to Meyers' Texas farm. Dylan will be playing U.S. arenas in October and November to promote the album. "They are a fantastic band," Meyers says of the touring group. "Larry and Tony, they got the chords – they know those from way back, because they've been playing with Bob so long. And Charlie" – who joined Dylan in 1999 – "knows the guitar from what's going on now. It all blends so well.

"I think Bob has got the perfect thing," Meyers adds. "Lord help him, if he can go for another ten or twelve years, I think that band will be there with him."

26 October 2001
The Staple Singers interview, Ambassador East Hotel, Chicago, IL

Source: *TWM* 4901,4931,4953

In 4869 and 4901, there was some information about Dylan being interviewed in Chicago last October in connection with a WTTW-TV programme about Mavis Staples of the Staples Singers. Last Friday, there was an article about the programme in the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

For this half-hour programme, WTTW gathered approximately 20 hours of interview material from a wide range of people, including Harry Belafonte, Jerry Butler, Jesse Jackson, Natalie Merchant and Albertina Walker. However, even Dylan's own people were surprised that he agreed to a 15-minute one-on-one camera interview. The producers had to submit a list of questions in advance but, as Dylan was doing it as a favour to the Staples family, it was no time to insist on journalistic integrity.

WTTW rented a suite in the same Chicago hotel in which Dylan was staying during last year's tour. They invited Mavis and her sister, Yvonne, to watch the interview. Mavis had not seen Dylan since she sang background vocals on Like A Rolling Stone on the 10th anniversary David Letterman show in January 1992. Dylan arrived on time, alone, and tiptoed into the room in his black boots, cowboy hat and gambler's get-up, carrying a single red rose for Mavis. Dylan and Mavis embraced. She, in turn, gave Dylan a Beanie Baby bear, saying, This is called "Hope". Dylan, cradling the bear, smiled, **Of course.**

Dylan said that, while he had first met the Staples at the 1963 Newport Folk Festival, he'd been listening to them since he was 12. **We'd listen to the radio, usually late in the evening. Dragnet and FBI, Peace and War, Inner Sanctum and Jack Benny. And then, after the radio shows would come on, we used to pick up the station out of Shreveport** [Louisiana] **and they used to play rhythm and blues. Bobby 'Blue' Bland, Junior Parker and Muddy** [Waters] **and** [Howlin'] **Wolf and all that. But then, at midnight, the gospel stuff would start. I got acquainted with the Swan Silvertones and the Dixie Hummingbirds, the Highway QCs and all that. But the Staple Singers came on... and they were so different.**

The initial proposal for the programme had been to base it around the Staples Singers and the civil rights movement. Dylan, however, was reluctant to talk about social issues in the 1960s. In contrast, they couldn't get him to stop talking about the musical influence of the Staples. In particular, he referred to Mavis' voice and Pop's tremolo guitar. Without going into detail, I have heard exactly the same from other people in similar circumstances; guarded in discussing his own life, Dylan opens up when talking about other musicians and artists.

Pervis Staples recalled an incident at the Newport Folk Festival. *He jumped off the* [diving] *board* [at the motel] *and his shorts came off. I went in and got 'em. I thought something happened to him because he had his boots on, too. We got to be friends. We bought some wine and he wrote A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Rain on the back of a shirt board.* Asked about this, Dylan said it pretty much sounded right and that he wrote many songs on many different objects. We know, of course, that he might have written out the lyrics to that song there but he certainly didn't compose it then.

The programme was due to air on Channel 11 in Chicago, last night.

Further to 4931 and its predecessors, the Chicago Stories programme was about the Staples Singers not just Mavis. Apart from a 1964 colour photograph of Dylan, Mavis, Bob Neuwirth and a fourth person, Dylan's contribution came in four interview snippets.

Mavis was singing stuff like, ***"Yonder comes li'l David with his rock and his sling / I don't want to meet him / He's a dangerous man"*** **and, oh my goodness, when... when I... that made my hair stand up listening to that. That just seemed like that's the way the world is.**

He [Pops] **would sing and he had, kind of, a sweet, gentle kind of approach to... but, even back then when I was 12, he sounded more to me like a blues singer singing gospel with**

a... He didn't have a very high voice, like Skip James or something, but it was definitely higher than Bukka White. It was just an easy, kind of flowing, gentle voice.

Pops' tremelo sound not only was... made the listener tremble and shake, while other peoples' tremelo sounds didn't quite achieve that. Pops made you feel the trembling that was inside yourself.

There was no telling which way they were going to go. They were completely unpredictable. Every song was different.

You will note that none of the above coincides with Dylan's words reported in the Chicago Sun-Times' article, as summarised in 4931.

25 September 2001
Mikal Gilmore interview for *Rolling Stone*, Santa Monica, CA

Source: *Rolling Stone*, issues 882,883/4 November 22, and December 6-13, 2001; pp. 56-69 & 116 resp.

BOB DYLAN by Mikal Gilmore

"That night in Switzerland," says Bob Dylan, **"it all just came to me. All of a sudden I could sing anything. There might've been a time when I was going to quit or retire, but the next day it was like, 'I can't really retire now because I really haven't done anything yet,' you know ? I want to see where this will lead me, because now I can control it all. Before, I wasn't controlling it. I was just being swept by the wind, this way or that way."**

As Dylan speaks, we are seated at a small table in a comfortable hotel suite, located on the beach at Santa Monica. Dylan is dressed in the sort of country-gentleman finery he has tended to favor in recent years – a nicely stitched white Western shirt and sharp-looking black slacks with arrows embroidered at the edges of the pocket seams. Dylan has been talking about a crucial turning point in his life and art, during the time since ROLLING STONE last published a lengthy interview with him in 1992. In several of those years, Dylan produced erratic and mixed-up work – and he is the first to admit it. But increasingly, those years also featured some of the most resourceful and remarkable creativity in Dylan's forty-year recording and performing career – and that progress, it is only fair to say, was sometimes less noted than it should have been. All that changed in 1997. In that year, Dylan fell sick with a rare fungal infection that caused severe swelling around his heart. It was a painful condition that temporarily debilitated him, and it could have proved fatal. Around the same time as his illness, Dylan finished and soon released his first album of original material in seven years, *Time Out of Mind*. It was a work unlike any other that Dylan had created – a trek through the unmapped frontier that lies beyond loss and disillusion – and it was heralded as a startling work of renewal. *Time Out of Mind* went on to win the Grammy for Best Album of the Year -Dylan's first such honor in that category.

In September, Dylan released another collection of new songs, *Love and Theft* – his forty-third album. *Love and Theft* sounds at moments like Dylan is unearthing new revelations with an acerbic wit and impulsive language – in much the same way he did on his early hallmark, *Highway 61 Revisited* – though *Love and Theft* also seems to derive from ancient well-springs of American vision and concealment, much like *John Wesley Harding* or his legendary 1967 *Basement Tapes* sessions with the Band. Dylan, however, bristles at such comparisons. ***Love and Theft***, as he puts it, **plays by its own rules**.

The 1980s saw Dylan lose his focus. He mounted widely publicized and well-attended tours with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers and the Grateful Dead – but these were tours in which Dylan seemed to be casting about for a sense of connection and intent. To many observers, Dylan gave the impression that he was adrift. In recent years, he has told the story of an event – a moment of awareness – that came to him onstage in Locarno, Switzerland. He said that a phrase struck him – **"I'm determined to stand whether God will deliver me or not"** – and in that moment, he realized that it was his vocation to rededicate himself to his music and its performance. Dylan didn't make any public pronouncements about this realization and how it had changed his purpose as a singer, musician and songwriter. In a low-key yet determined way, Dylan invested himself in his music's sustaining power perhaps more than ever before. As good as *Time Out of Mind* and *Love and Theft* may be, the live shows that Dylan has been playing for years with an evolving, carefully selected band (which presently consists of bassist Tony Garnier, drummer David Kemper, and guitarists Larry Campbell and Charlie Sexton), make the case that his essential art can be found onstage even more than on record. Indeed, Dylan – who turned sixty this last May – seems to have adopted a viewpoint similar to the one favored by jazz trumpeter and bandleader Miles Davis for most of his career: namely, that the

truest vital experience of music resides in the moment of its performance, in the living act of its formation and the spontaneous yet hard-earned discoveries that those acts of creation yield. The next time the musicians play the same song, it is not really the same song. It is a new moment and creation, a new possibility, a newfound place on the map, soon to be left behind for the next place. These live shows are the quintessence of Bob Dylan and how he has moved into the new century, bringing with him what he values most from the music of the last century, even as night after night he takes us to unfamiliar and transfixing understandings of what we once thought we knew so well.

It was a Tuesday in September when Dylan and I sat down to discuss his recent art – two weeks to the day after the shocking attacks that destroyed New York's World Trade Center buildings. (The tragedy's date, September 11th, was also the release date for Love and Theft.) As we talked, Dylan and I were near the room's open balcony doors and windows, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The Los Angeles airport is just down the highway, and every few minutes you could see an airplane in its ascent as it embarked on its journey. Once or twice, we just watched without comment, but there was a sense that nobody will ever look at the commonplace sight of a plane moving across the sky in quite the same way again. It would be unfair to Dylan to make the claim that anything in his music anticipated the horrific turn of recent events. And yet clearly he has been writing about dread realities and dangerous likelihoods for four decades now, from the end-times vision of 1963's "*A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*" to his current remorseful statement about personal and national spirit in *Love and Theft's* "*Mississippi*." Bob Dylan may no longer be the young firebrand who tore through the world with such energy and disdain in the 1960s, but he is still a songwriter, singer and literary artist of continuing power and depth. If there was any principal meaning to Dylan's early music, perhaps it was that it is hardly trouble-free for a smart, conscientious person to live in times that witness the betrayal or inversion of our best values and dreams. To live through such times with scruples and intellect intact, Dylan has declared in his music, one has to hold an honest and fearless mirror up to the face of cultural and moral disorder.

Dylan was convivial and confident as we talked on this day, but in his speech, just as in his songs and vocals, one senses that he carries a dignified knowledge of enduring mysteries that probably unsettle him every bit as much as his awareness of them distinguishes him. And in conversation, just as in his music, Bob Dylan lets go of his insights in constantly surprising and singular turns of phrase and temperament.

In 1998, when you received the Grammy Award for Album of the Year, you said something that surprised me – maybe surprised other people as well. You said, **"We didn't know what we had when we did it, but we did it anyway."** That was interesting because "*Time Out of Mind*" plays as an album made with purpose and vision, with a consistent mood and set of themes. Was it, in fact, an album you approached with forethought, or was its seeming cohesiveness incidental?

What happened was, I'd been writing down couplets and verses and things, and then putting them together at later times. I had a lot of that – it was starting to pile up – so I thought, "Well, I got all this – maybe, I'll try to record it." I'd had good luck with Daniel Lanois [producer of the 1989 album *Oh Mercy*]**, so I called him and showed him a lot of the songs. I also familiarized him with the way I wanted the songs to sound. I think I played him some Slim Harpo recordings – early stuff like that. He seemed pretty agreeable to it, and we set aside a certain time and place. But I had a schedule – I only had so much time – and we made that record, *Time Out of Mind*, that way. It was a little rougher... I wouldn't say rougher... It was... I feel we were lucky to get that record.**

Really?

Well, I didn't go into it with the idea that this was going to be a finished album. It got off the tracks more than a few times, and people got frustrated. I know I did. I know Lanois did. There were myriad musicians down there. At that point in time, I didn't have the same

band I have now. I was kind of just auditioning players here and there for a band, but I didn't feel like I could trust them man-to-man in the studio with unrecorded songs. So we started to use some musicians that Lanois would choose and a couple that I had in mind: [keyboardist] **Jim Dickinson;** [drummer] **Jim Keltner;** [guitarist] **Duke Robillard. I started just assembling people that I knew could play. They had the right soulful kind of attitude for these songs. But we just couldn't... I felt extremely frustrated, because I couldn't get any of the uptempo songs that I wanted.**

Don't you think a song like "*Cold Irons Bound*" certainly has a drive to it?

Yeah, there's a real drive to it, but it isn't even close to the way I had it envisioned. I mean, I'm satisfied with what we did. But there were things I had to throw out because this assortment of people just couldn't lock in on riffs and rhythms all together. I got so frustrated in the studio that I didn't really dimensionalize the songs. I could've if I'd had the willpower. I just didn't at that time, and so you got to steer it where the event itself wants to go. I feel there was a sameness to the rhythms. It was more like that swampy, voodoo thing that Lanois is so good at. I just wish I'd been able to get more of a legitimate rhythm-oriented sense into it. I didn't feel there was any mathematical thing about that record at all. The one beat could've been anywhere, when instead, the singer should have been defining where the drum should be. It was tricky trying to steer that ship.

I think that's why people say *Time Out of Mind* is sort of dark and foreboding: because we locked into that one dimension in the sound. People say the record deals with mortality – my mortality for some reason! [Laughs] **Well, it doesn't deal with my mortality. It maybe just deals with mortality in general. It's one thing that we all have in common, isn't it? But I didn't see any one critic say: "It deals with my mortality" – you know, his own. As if he's immune in some kind of way – like whoever's writing about the record has got eternal life and the singer doesn't. I found this condescending attitude toward that record revealed in the press quite frequently, but, you know, nothing you can do about that.**

The language in "*Time Out of Mind*" seems very stripped down, as if the songs don't have the patience or room to bear any unessential imagery.

I just come down the line too far to make any superfluous song. I mean, I'm sure I've made enough of them, or that I've got enough superfluous lines in a lot of songs. But I've kind of passed that point. I have to impress myself first, and unless I'm speaking in a certain language to my own self, I don't feel anything less than that will do for the public, really.

"*Highlands*" strikes me as the album's most singular song. It begins in a place of isolation; it tells a story but rambles. It's poignant as hell, but it's also very funny – especially the conversation it portrays between the narrator and the waitress in the café. And by the time we get to the end of it, we don't know if we're in a place of desolation or release.

That particular song, we worked with a track that I had done at a sound check once in some hall. The assembled group of musicians we had down at the studio just couldn't get it, so I said, "Just use that original track, and I'll sing over it." It was just some old blues song I always wanted to use, and I felt that once I was able to control it, I could've written about anything with it. But you're right – I forgot that was on that record. You know, I'm not really quite sure why it seems to people that *Time Out of Mind* is a darker picture. In my mind, there's nothing dark about it. It's not like, you know, Dante's *Inferno* or something. It doesn't paint a picture of goblins and goons and grotesque-looking creatures or anything like that. I really don't understand why it is looked at as such a dark album, really. It does have that song "*Highlands*" at the end.

In the end, are you happy with "*Time Out of Mind*"? After all, it was seen as not merely a return to form for you but also as a real extension of your gifts – and as your most powerful work since 1975's "*Blood on the Tracks*."

Well, you know, I never listen to my records. Once they're turned in, I'm done with them. I don't want to hear them anymore. I know the songs. I'll play them, but I don't want to hear them on a record. It sounds superficial to me to hear a record – I don't feel like it tells me anything in particular. I'm not going to learn anything from it.

It was during the final stages of the album that you were hit with a serious swelling around your heart and were laid up in the hospital. You've said that that infection was truly painful and debilitating. Did it alter your view of life in any way?

No. No, because it didn't! You can't even say something like, "Well, you were in the wrong place at the wrong time." Even that excuse didn't work. It was like I learned nothing. I wish I could say I put the time to good use or, you know, got highly educated in something or had some revelations about anything. But I can't say that any of that happened. I just laid around and then had to wait for my strength to come back.

Do you think that the proximity of your illness to the album's release helped account for why reviewers saw so many themes of mortality in "*Time Out of Mind*"?

When I recorded that album, the media weren't paying any attention to me. I was totally outside of it.

True, but the album came out not long after you'd gone through the illness.

It did?

Yes. You were in the hospital in the spring of 1997, and "*Time Out of Mind*" was released in autumn that same year.

OK, well, then it could've been perceived that way in the organized media. But that would just be characterizing the album, really.

I want to step back a hit, to those years preceding "*Time Out of Mind*." First, I'd like to ask you about an occasion at an earlier Grammy Awards, in 1991, when you received a Lifetime Achievement Award. At that point, America was deep into its involvement in the Gulf War. You came out onstage that night with a small band and played a severe version of "*Masters of War*" – a performance that remains controversial even today. Some critics found it rushed and embarrassing, others thought it was brilliant. Then, after Jack Nicholson presented you the award, you made the following comment: **"My daddy** [once said]**, 'Son, it's possible to become so defiled in this world that your own mother and father will abandon you. And if that happens, God will always believe in your own ability to mend your ways.' "** I've always thought that was one of the more remarkable things I've heard you say. What was going through your mind at that time?

I don't remember the time and place my father said that to me, and maybe he didn't say it to me in that exact way. I was probably paraphrasing the whole idea, really – I'm not even sure I paraphrased in the proper context. It might've been something that just sort of popped in my head at that time. The only thing I remember about that whole episode, as long as you bring it up, was that I had a fever – like 104. I was extremely sick that night. Not only that, but I was disillusioned with the entire musical community and environment. If I remember correctly, the Grammy people called me months before then and said that they wanted to give me this Lifetime Achievement honor. Well, we all know that they give those things out when you're old – when you're nothing, a has-been. Everybody knows that, right? So I wasn't sure whether it was a compliment or an insult. I wasn't really sure about it. And then they said, "Here's what we want to do..." I don't want to name these performers because you know them, but one performer was going to sing "*Like a Rolling Stone*." Another performer was going to sing "*The Times Are A-Changin'*." Another was going to sing "*All Along the Watchtower*," and another was going to sing "*It's All Over Now, Baby Blue*." They were going to sing bits of all these songs, and then they were going to have somebody introduce me, and I would just collect this Lifetime Achievement Award, say a few words and go on my merry way. The performers, they told me, had all agreed to it, so there really wasn't anything for me to do except show up.

Then the Gulf War broke out. The Grammy people called and said, "Listen, we're in a tight fix. So-and-so, who was going to sing '*Times Are A-Changin'*,' is afraid to get on an airplane. So-and-so, who was going to sing '*Like a Rolling Stone*,' doesn't want to travel because he just had another baby and he doesn't want to leave his family." That's understandable. But then so-and-so, who was going to sing "*It's All Over, Baby Blue*," was in Africa and didn't want to take a chance flying to New York, and so-and-so, who was going to

sing "*All Along the Watchtower*," wasn't sure he wanted to be at any high-visibility place right then, because it may be a little dangerous. So, they said, "Could you come and sing? Could you fill the time?" And I said, "What about the guy who's going to introduce me [Jack Nicholson]**?" They said, "He's OK. He's coming." Anyway, I got disillusioned with all the characters at that time – with their inner character and their ability to be able to keep their word and their idealism and their insecurity. All the ones that have the gall to thrust their tortured inner psyches on an outer world but can't at least be true to their word. From that point on, that's what the music business and all the people in it represented to me. I just lost all respect for them. There's a few that are decent and God-fearing and will stand up in a righteous way. But I wouldn't want to count on most of them. And maybe me singing "*Masters of War*"... I've said before that song's got nothing to do with being anti-war. It has more to do with the military industrial complex that Eisenhower was talking about. Anyway, I went up and did that, but I was sick, and I felt they put me through a whole lot of trouble over nothing. I just tried to disguise myself the best I could. That was more along the line of... you know, the press was finding me irrelevant then, and it couldn't have happened at a better time, really, because I wouldn't have wanted to have been relevant. I wouldn't have wanted to be someone that the press was examining – every move. I wouldn't have ever been able to develop again in any kind of artistic way.**

But certainly you knew by playing "*Masters of War*" at the height of the Gulf War, it would be received a certain way.

Yeah, but I wasn't looking at it that way. I knew the lyrics of the song were holding up, and I brought maybe two or three ferocious guitar players, you know? And I always had a song for any occasion.

Truthfully, I was just disgusted in having to be there after they told me what they intended to do and then backed out. I probably shouldn't have even gone myself, and I wouldn't have gone, except the other guy [Nicholson] **was true to his word.** [Taps his fingers rapidly on the tabletop]

What about that statement you made, about the wisdom your father had shared with you? It could almost be read as a personal statement – you talking about your own life. Or was it about the world around you?

I was thinking more in terms of, like, we're living in a Machiavellian world, whether we like it or we don't. Any act that's immoral, as long as it succeeds, it's all right. To apply that type of meaning to the way I was feeling that night probably has more to do with it than any kind of conscious effort to bring out some religiosity, or any kind of biblical saying about God, one way or another. You hear a lot about God these days: God, the beneficent; God, the all-great; God, the Almighty; God, the most powerful; God, the giver of life; God, the creator of death. I mean, we're hearing about God all the time, so we better learn how to deal with it. But if we know anything about God, God is arbitrary. So people better be able to deal with that, too.

That's interesting, because so many people think that God is constant, you know, and unchanging.

Oh, absolutely.

But "arbitrary" would seem to imply a rather different view. Is there something about the word "arbitrary" that you would like to clarify or perhaps that I'm not understanding?

No. I mean, you can look it up in the dictionary. I don't consider myself a sophist or a cynic or a stoic or some kind of bourgeois industrialist, or whatever titles people put on people. Basically, I'm just a regular person. I don't walk around all the time out of my mind with inspiration. So what can I tell you about that? Anyway, I wasn't in a good state of mind that night. I was frustrated. It's difficult to attach yourself to the past or be paralyzed by the past in any kind of way, so I just said it and moved on. I was glad to have gotten out of there, really.

You said a moment ago that this happened during a time when you weren't being seen as relevant and didn't want to be seen as relevant. Though you would continue to tour through

most of the 1990s, more than seven years would pass between albums of new songs. Some biographers have more or less referred to this as a time when you seemed adrift and confused - a time in which you seemed unhappy and disconnected from your music. What was going on during this period?

I really thought I was through making records. I didn't want to make any more. I thought, "I'll make a couple more records and just have them be folk songs, in a really simplified way -no big production or anything." Beyond that, I didn't want to record anymore. I was more concerned with what I do in personal appearances. It was clear to me I had more than enough songs to play. Forever.

See, I'd made that record with Lanois in 1988 [*Oh Mercy*]**. I was already playing over a hundred shows a year at that point. I decided I would just go back to live performing, which I hadn't really thought I'd done since maybe 1966. Some performers make a lot of sacrifices to make a record – they forfeit an abundance of time and energy. I did that with Lanois back then, and it worked out rather well. But then around that same time I was making a Traveling Wilburys record, and then I started this record with Don Was, *Under the Red Sky*. All of this was happening in the same period. Looking back on it now, it seems kind of unthinkable. I would leave the Wilburys and go down to Sunset Sound and record *Under the Red Sky* simultaneously, all within a set schedule because I needed to be in Prague or someplace on a certain date. And then both records – the Wilburys record and *Under the Red Sky* – I'd just leave them hanging and see the finished product later. All those things happened at the same time, and that was when I found I'd really had it. My rational mind didn't know what to make of that. I'd really had my fill. I was going to stick to my declaration and definitely not make any records. I didn't feel the need to announce that, but I had come to that conclusion. I didn't care to record no more. I'd rather play on the road. Recording was too mental. Also, I didn't feel I was writing any of the songs that I really wanted to write. I wasn't getting the help I needed to record right, I didn't like the sound of the records... I don't really remember. It was just... one thing leads to another, you know? I reckoned I was done with it. But then you go out and play live shows, and you do get thoughts, and you do get an inspiration here and there. So I just reluctantly started writing things down, in the way I described that led to the making of *Time Out of Mind*.**

Did you ever consider just flat-out retiring?

Well, I really don't have any defined retirement plan! More than a few times I probably felt I had retired. I felt I'd had retired in 1966 and 1967. I was fulfilling my recording contracts, but outside of that I think I felt like I had retired from the cultural scene at the time.

Did you have comparable feelings at any point in the 1980s or 1990s?

Something would always come up that put the idea off. But sure, at times I felt like, "I don't want to do this anymore." Then something would always lead me to something else, which would keep me at it.

According to a couple of recent biographies, the late 1980s and early 1990s were troubling for you in other ways. Some people have claimed that these were years when you were drinking too frequently – and that your drinking was interfering with your music or was a reflection of a deeper unhappiness for you. According to these biographers, it wasn't until you quit drinking – some time in the early 1990s – that your performances and writing really rebounded.

That's completely inaccurate. [Laughs] **I can drink or not drink. I don't know why people would associate drinking or not drinking with anything that I do, really. I've never thought about it one way or another. For some reason there's a certain crowd – if you want to call it a crowd – that would assume certain things about me or anybody which simply aren't true. They perceive it by appearances. They might hear rumors. They might start rumors, but it's their own minds going to work. Therefore, if they believe a certain thing about that person, then any act that person does they would apply it to that. "Oh, he fell down – he must be drinking." Or, "He smashed his car into a tree. I guess he was hopped-up on something."**

But those are people who are celebrity-minded. They live in their own universe, and they try to project it outwardly, and it doesn't work. Usually, those people have a touch of insanity, and they have to be knocked down to earth. It's like you got to choose. Either there's order or there's chaos, and you got to choose. People of that nature don't seem to understand either one. And they apply it to, well, in this country, to celebrities. But I don't think any of us who could fit the description of that can pay any mind to what people think or how many books are written or any of that if we want to exist and have a certain amount of free will about what we do. I mean, these kind of people are the ones who would make laws against free will, that are contrary to free will. They're just not serious people. Unfortunately, I guess, all performers have a bunch of them hanging on. Anybody and everybody can get typecast, you know, in a second, by just doing great work. But the truth is, it's my job to drive my own car, if you know what I mean. It's not somebody else's job.

But something did seem to turn around for you in the early 1990s. You've said as much yourself. You've spoken about some epiphany that changed your purpose and commitment – some recognition that came to you onstage. You've described it as a moment when you realized that what was important was not your legend or how that weighed you down. What was important, you seemed to say, was for you to stand by your work – and that meant playing music on a regular basis, no matter who you were playing it for.

It happened – or had its beginning, anyway – when I was playing some shows with the Grateful Dead [in 1987]**. They wanted to play some of my songs that I hadn't played in years and years. I had already been on a long string of dates with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, and night after night I was only playing maybe fifteen to twenty of the songs I had written, and I couldn't really grasp the older ones. But when I began to play with the Grateful Dead, those are the only songs they wanted to play: the ones that I wasn't playing with Petty. I really had some sort of epiphany then on how to do those songs again, using certain techniques that I had never thought about. When I went back and played with Petty again, I was using those techniques, and I found I could play anything. But then there was a show in Switzerland when the techniques failed me, and I had to come up with another one really quick. I was kind of standing on a different foundation at that point and realized, "I could do this." I found out I could do it effortlessly – that I could sing night after night after night and never get tired. I could project it out differently.**

Not only that, but Lonnie Johnson, the blues-jazz player, showed me a technique on the guitar in maybe 1964. I hadn't really understood it when he first showed it to me. It had to do with the mathematical order of the scale on a guitar, and how to make things happen, where it gets under somebody's skin and there's really nothing they can do about it, because it's mathematical. He didn't even play that way himself. He played mostly jazz – a kind of guitar I can't play at all, though when I think of a guitar player, I think of somebody like Eddie Lang or Charlie Christian or Freddie Green. I don't listen to many people in the rock & roll area. Anyway, he just told me, "I want to show you something. You might be able to use this some day." It's more kind of an ancient way of playing. I always wanted to use this technique, but I never was really able to do it with my own songs.

One of the things I've noticed about your shows is that starting in the 1990s they grew more and more musical. You've opened the songs up to more instrumental exploration and new textures and rhythmic shifts – like you're trying to stretch or reinvent them – and you seem very much at the heart of that. You're your own hand director at this point.

Well, I don't think you've seen me play too many mindless jams. What I do is all done with technique and certain stratagems. But they're not intellectual ones; they're designed to make people feel something. And I understand that it's not necessarily the same for everyone who hears me play and sing. Everyone is feeling a different thing. I would like to be a performer who maybe could read and write music and play the violin. Then I could design a bigger band with more comprehensive parts of harmony in different arrangements, and still have the songs evolve within that. But if anything, I do know my limitations, and so I don't try to transcend those limitations. Or if I do transcend the limitations, it's all done with the

technique I was talking about. Which is to say, you can do it whether you feel good or you don't feel good, or no matter how you're feeling. It really doesn't matter. It has nothing to do with personality. It's difficult even to find the words to talk about it.

It seems that some of your most impassioned and affecting performances, from night to night, are your covers of traditional folk songs.

Folk music is where it all starts and in many ways ends. If you don't have that foundation, or if you're not knowledgeable about it and you don't know how to control that, and you don't feel historically tied to it, then what you're doing is not going to be as strong as it could be. Of course, it helps to have been born in a certain era because it would've been closer to you, or it helps to be a part of the culture when it was happening. It's not the same thing, relating to something second- or third-hand off of a record.

I think one of the best records that I've ever been even a part of was the record I made with Big Joe Williams and Victoria Spivey. Now that's a record that I hear from time to time and I don't mind listening to it. It amazes me that I was there and had done that.

In "*Invisible Republic*" – Greil Marcus' book about you, the Band, the *Basement Tapes* sessions and the place of all that in American culture [now retitled "*The Old, Weird America: The World of Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes*"] – Marcus wrote about the importance of Harry Smith's legendary "*Anthology of American Folk Music*" and its influence on all of your work, from your earliest to most-recent recordings.

Well, he makes way too much of that.

Why do you say that?

Because those records were around – that Harry Smith anthology – but that's not what everybody was listening to. Sure, there were all those songs. You could hear them at people's houses. I know in my case, I think Dave Van Ronk had that record. But in those days we really didn't have places to live, or places to have a lot of records. We were sort of living from this place to that – kind of a transient existence. I know I was living that way. You heard records where you could, but mostly you heard other performers. All those people [Marcus is] **talking about, you could hear the actual people singing those ballads. You could hear Clarence Ashley, Doc Watson, Dock Boggs, the Memphis Jug Band, Furry Lewis. You could see those people live and in person. They were around. He intellectualizes it too much. Performers did know of that record, but it wasn't, in retrospect, the monumental iconic recordings at the time that he makes them out to be.**

It wasn't like someone discovered this pot of gold somewhere. There were other records out that were on rural labels. Yazoo had records out. They weren't all compiled like they are now. In New York City, there was a place called the Folklore Center that had all the folk-music records. It was like a library, and you could listen to them there. And they had folk-music books there. Certain other towns had it, too. There was a place in Chicago called the Old Town School of Folk Music. You could find the stuff there. It wasn't the only thing that people had – that *Anthology of American Folk Music*. And the Folkways label itself had many other folk recordings of all kinds of people. They just were highly secretive. And they weren't really secretive because they were trying to be secretive. The people I knew – the people who were like-minded as myself – were trying to be folk musicians. That's all they wanted to be, that's all the aspirations they had. There wasn't anything monetary about it. There was no money in folk music. It was a way of life. And it was an identity which the three-buttoned-suit postwar generation of America really wasn't offering to kids my age: an identity. This music was impossible to get anywhere really, except in a nucleus of a major city, and a record shop might have a few recordings of the hard-core folklore music. There were other folk-music records, commercial folk-music records, like those by the Kingston Trio. I never really was an elitist. Personally, I liked the Kingston Trio. I could see the picture. But for a lot of people it was a little hard to take. Like the left-wing puritans that seemed to have a hold on the folk-music community, they disparaged these records. I didn't particularly want to sing any of those songs that way, but the Kingston Trio were probably the best commercial group going, and they seemed to know what they were doing.

What I was most interested in twenty-four hours a day was the rural music. But you could only hear it, like, in isolated caves [laughs]**, like, on a few bohemian streets in America at that time. The idea was to be able to master these songs. It wasn't about writing your own songs. That didn't even enter anybody's mind.**

In a way, this line of talk brings us to your newest album, *"Love and Theft."* On one hand, parts of this record sound like work that might have heralded from the early forms of twentieth-century folk music we've been discussing. Its sense of timelessness and caprices reminds me of some of the songs we hear on *"The Basement Tapes"* and *"John Wesley Harding"* – records that emanated from your strong folk background. But *"Love and Theft"* also seems to recall *"Highway 61 Revisited"* and that album's delight in discovering new world-changing methods of language and sharp wit, and the way in which the music digs down deep into ancient blues structures to yield something wholly unexpected. Just as important, *"Love and Theft,"* like your other albums I just mentioned, feels like a work made specifically from inside an American temperament – the America we live in now, but also the America we have left behind. Or am I reading too much into this record?

For starters, no one should really be curious or too excited about comparing this album to any of my other albums. Compare this album to the other albums that are out there. Compare this album to other artists who make albums. You know, comparing me to myself [laughs] **is really like... I mean, you're talking to a person that feels like he's walking around in the ruins of Pompeii all the time. It's always been that way, for one reason or another. I deal with all the old stereotypes. The language and the identity I use is the one that I know only so well, and I'm not about to go on and keep doing this – comparing my new work to my old work. It creates a kind of Achilles' heel for myself. It isn't going to happen.**

Maybe a better way to put it is to ask: Do you see this as an album that emanates from your experience of America at this time?

Every one of the records I've made has emanated from the entire panorama of what America is to me. America, to me, is a rising tide that lifts all ships, and I've never really sought inspiration from other types of music. My problem in writing songs has always been how to tone down the rhetoric in using the language. I don't really give it a whole lot of soulful thought. A song is a reflection of what I see all around me all the time. I'm only speaking about... [Pauses] **See, I'm still back on your other question. I really don't think it's fair to compare this album to any of my past albums. I mean, I'm still the same person. You know, like Hank Williams would say, my hair's still curly, my eyes are still blue. And that's all I know.**

What is your own description of what the songs on *"Love and Theft"* are about?

You're putting me in a difficult position. A question like that can't be answered in the terms that you're asking. A song is just a mood that an artist is attempting to convey. To be truthful, I haven't listened to this record since it was made – since probably last spring. Actually, I don't need to hear it. I just need to look at the lyrics, and we can start from there. But I really don't know what the summation of all these songs would really represent. [Pauses again, drumming his fingers on the table]

The whole album deals with power. If life teaches us anything, it's that there's nothing that men and women won't do to get power. The album deals with power, wealth, knowledge and salvation – the way I look at it. If it's a great album – which I hope it is – it's a great album because it deals with great themes. It speaks in a noble language. It speaks of the issues or the ideals of an age in some nation, and hopefully, it would also speak across the ages. It'd be as good tomorrow as it is today and would've been as good yesterday. That's what I was trying to make happen, because just to make another record at this point in my career... career, by the way, isn't how I look at what I do. Career is a French word. It means "carrier." It's something that takes you from one place to the other. I don't feel like what I do qualifies to be called a career. It's more of a calling.

This album holds ruminations every bit as dark as those found in "*Time Out of Mind*," but this time you put them across without the previous album's spooky musical ambience. Since you produced this album yourself, you must have wanted a different sound.

The way the record is presented is just as important as what it's presenting. Therefore, anybody – even if they'd been a great producer – would only have gotten in the way on this, and there really wasn't a lot of time. I would've loved to have somebody help me make this record, but I couldn't think of anybody on short notice. And besides, what could they do? For this particular record it wouldn't have mattered.

There's also a good deal of humor on this record – maybe more than on any record of yours since the 1960s.

Well...

C'mon, there are some pretty funny lines on this album – like the exchange between Romeo and Juliet in "*Floater (Too Much to Ask)*," and that knock-knock joke in "Po' Boy."

Yeah, funny... and dark. But still, in my own mind, not really poking fun at the principles that would guide a person's life or anything. Basically, the songs deal with what many of my songs deal with – which is business, politics and war, and maybe love interest on the side. That would be the first level you would have to appreciate them on.

In a recent interview you said that you saw this album as autobiographical.

Oh, absolutely. It would be autobiographical on every front. It obviously plays by its own set of rules, but a listener wouldn't really have to be aware of those rules when hearing it. But absolutely. It's not like the songs were written by some kind of Socrates, you know, some kind of buffoon, the man about town pretending to be happy [laughs]**. There wouldn't be any of that in this record.**

Both "*Time Out of Mind*" and "*Love and Theft*" have been received as some of the best work you've ever done. Does songwriting now feel more accessible to you than it did before?

Well, I follow the dictates of my conscience to write a song, and I don't really have a time or place I set aside. I don't really preconceive it. I couldn't tell you when I could come up with something. It just happens at odd times, here and there. It's amazing to me that I'm still able to do it, really. And I do them as well as I seem able to handle it. When you're young, you're probably writing stronger and a lot quicker, but in my case, I just try to use the traditional values of logic and reason no matter what age I've ever written any of my songs.

This record was released on September 11th – the same date as the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. I've talked with several people in the time since then who have turned to "Love and Theft" because they find something in it that matches the spirit of dread and uncertainty of our present conditions. For my part, I've kept circling around a line from "*Mississippi*": "*Sky full of fire, pain pourin' down.*" Is there anything you would like to say about your reaction to the events of that day?

One of those Rudyard Kipling poems, "Gentlemen-Rankers," comes to my mind: "We have done with Hope and Honour, we are lost to Love and Truth/We are dropping down the ladder rung by rung/And the measure of our torment is the measure of our youth/God help us, for we knew the worst too young!" If anything, my mind would go to young people at a time like this. That's really the only way to put it.

You mean because of what's at stake for them right now, as we apparently go to war?

Exactly. I mean, art imposes order on life, but how much more art will there be? We don't really know. There's a secret sanctity of nature. How much more of that will there be? At the moment, the rational mind's way of thinking wouldn't really explain what's happened. You need something else, with a capital E, to explain it. It's going to have to be dealt with sooner or later, of course.

Do you see any hope for the situation we find ourselves in?

I don't really know what I could tell you. I don't consider myself an educator or an explainer. You see what it is that I do, and that's what I've always done. But it is time now for great men to come forward. With small men, no great thing can be accomplished at the moment. Those people in charge, I'm sure they've read Sun-Tzu, who wrote *The Art of War* in

the sixth century. In there he says, "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself and not your enemy, for every victory gained you will suffer a defeat." And he goes on to say, "If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle." Whoever's in charge, I'm sure they would have read that.

Things will have to change. And one of these things that will have to change: People will have to change their internal world.

The below passage was published in the following issue of *Rolling Stone* in the article *People of the year*. Apparently it comes from the very same interview.

This year marked some critical moments in Bob Dylan's singular life. In February, he won an Oscar for Best Original Song for "*Things Have Changed*" (from *Wonder Boys*). In May, he turned sixty. (He didn't make much of the event – as he noted in a recent song, "*Old, young, age don't carry weight/It doesn't matter in the end*"). In September, he released a new album, *Love and Theft*, that makes most contemporary pop music seem jejune and passé by comparison. In October and November, he capped 2001 with a nationwide tour with his current band and, along the way, delivered some of his most vigorous and transfixing performances since his historic tour with the Hawks (later the Band), in 1965 and 1966. In other words, Dylan spent the better part of 2001 proving that, indeed, age doesn't necessarily matter when it comes to marking the peak points in one's creative life.

There's been a number of biographies and books about your work published in recent years. Have any of these biographers stirred resentment as they've pried into what were clearly undisclosed aspects of your life?

I don't feel that way at all. At the same time, there's a person that writes these kinds of books that has what they call a poetical lack of self. I think it's more of an elitist thing to write about me and have other people read about me. I mean, what is there to expose? We all belong to the human race, I assume. Am I that uncommon? But I don't think that anything's even come close to the truth.

I understand that next year Simon & Schuster will publish the first in a series of autobiographical volumes, to be called "*Chronicles*."

Columbia Records was going to release three of my old albums, and they were going to include outtakes and other songs I'd written at the same time that had never been on the albums. Seeing that I'm never really sure when I'm going to record a new record, I wasn't too excited about it, because I wouldn't have wanted them to compete with my new work. I didn't think too highly of the idea, but, just the same, I was thinking, "How would these things happen?" Of course, it would make sense if I was to write something fundamental in the historical process of what was going on at the times when I did make these records.

The records they wanted to do were *Oh Mercy*, *Blood on the Tracks* and *Freewheelin'*. So I blueprinted what I would want to say about these records and then I suddenly started remembering things, all triggered off these records, that I thought readers would find interesting. I got completely carried away in the process of... I guess call it novelistic writing. So what started out as just maybe notes for a record turned out to be something much more than that, where I got a handle on how to write something which could deal with the present, the past and the future, because I was writing from the future. It turned into something that felt far weightier than just notes on a CD, which are hard to read anyway.

It's not like I was writing the stuff for frivolous reasons. I was actually being led to do it, and I felt that I needed to do it. But it took so much out of me, because you need a lot of mental light. It's easy to get burned out, and I don't like getting burned out on anything. So then I kind of wrote some other stuff about things, that all sprung from records I've made.

You know, I've made so many of them that I could take any of these records, and if I wanted to go more deeper into it – and that's when I just saw that it was an endless process.

There's a whole bunch of pages piled up. It's a biography. It's biographical, in every sense of the word. But there's more to it than that, because I'm a public figure, and so I can mention all kinds of things that have been written about already, but I bring a different resonance to it. My story on myself would have to be more interesting than anybody else that could look at it from the outside. Right?

30 November 2001
George Harrison's Obituary

Source: bobdylan.com & cnn.com

He was a giant, a great, great soul, with all the humanity, all the wit and humor, all the wisdom, the spirituality, the common sense of a man and compassion for people. He inspired love and had the strength of a hundred men. He was like the sun, the flowers and the moon and we shall miss him enormously. The world is a profoundly emptier place without him.

December 2001
Bob Dylan's Telegram to Sam Lay

Text of recent telegram sent to Sam (via the Recording Academy) from Bob Dylan:

Congratulations, sam on your heroes award.
It's good you are being recognized. It's so well-deserved. Walter, wolf and muddy, they must have known it too – that you're second to none – your flawless musicianship and unsurpassed timing, maestro with the sticks and brushes. Your hats, coats, shirts, and your walking shoes. That's no small thing either. (Thanks, by the way for the striped shirt and red tie. When i play drums i wear that stuff and people are surprised and impressed that my drumming improves.)
Congratulations again sam and thanks for backing me up on what many say is the best album i've ever made. Yours truly,
Bob Dylan

September 2003
Bob Dylan's Statement on Johnny Cash

Source: *The Internet*

I was asked to give a statement on Johnny's passing and thought about writing a piece instead called "Cash Is King," because that is the way I really feel. In plain terms, Johnny was and is the North Star; you could guide your ship by him – the greatest of the greats then and now. I first met him in '62 or '63 and saw him a lot in those years. Not so much recently, but in some kind of way he was with me more than people I see every day.

There wasn't much music media in the early Sixties, and *Sing Out!* was the magazine covering all things folk in character. The editors had published a letter chastising me for the direction my music was going. Johnny wrote the magazine back an open letter telling the editors to shut up and let me sing, that I knew what I was doing. This was before I had ever met him, and the letter meant the world to me. I've kept the magazine to this day.

Of course, I knew of him before he ever heard of me. In '55 or '56, "I Walk the Line" played all summer on the radio, and it was different than anything else you had ever heard. The record sounded like a voice from the middle of the earth. It was so powerful and moving. It was profound, and so was the tone of it, every line; deep and rich, awesome and mysterious all at once. "I Walk the Line" had a monumental presence and a certain type of majesty that was humbling. Even a simple line like "I find it very, very easy to be true" can take your measure. We can remember that and see how far we fall short of it.

Johnny wrote thousands of lines like that. Truly he is what the land and country is all about, the heart and soul of it personified and what it means to be here; and he said it all in plain English. I think we can have recollections of him, but we can't define him any more than we can define a fountain of truth, light and beauty. If we want to know what it means to be mortal, we need look no further than the Man in Black. Blessed with a profound imagination, he used the gift to express all the various lost causes of the human soul. This is a miraculous and humbling thing. Listen to him, and he always brings you to your senses. He rises high above all, and he'll never die or be forgotten, even by persons not born yet – especially those persons – and that is forever.

The letter Johnny Cash sent to Sing Out! – (published on 10 March 1964, issue #38)

A LETTER FROM JOHNNY CASH
HI BROADSIDE:
I got hung, but didn't choke… Bob Dylan slung his rope.
I sat down and listened quick… Gravy from that brain is thick.
He began by startin' alright… But the place he started…
Was way ahead, out of sight!
In the night there's a light.
A lamp is burning in all our dark… But… We must open our eyes to see it…
As he listened for the wind… To hear it.
Near my shores of mental dying, Grasping straws and twigs, and drowning,
Worthless I, But crying loudest, Came a Poet Troubadour, Singing fine familiar things.
Sang a hundred thousand lyrics, Right as Rain, Sweet as Sleep,
Words to thrill you… And to kill you.
Don't bad-mouth him, till you hear him,
Let him start by continuing, He's almost brand new,
SHUT UP! … AND LET HIM SING!

..... JOHNNY CASH

10 November 2003
Robert Hilburn Interview, Amsterdam, Holland

http://www.calendarlive.com/music/pop/cl-ca-dylan04apr04,0,3583678.story

SONGWRITERS SERIES
ROCK'S ENIGMATIC POET OPENS A LONG-PRIVATE DOOR

He learned from the Carter Family and Edgar Allan Poe, he confides. And he wrote "*Blowin' in the Wind*" in 10 minutes.
By Robert Hilburn
Times Staff Writer

April 4, 2004

First in an occasional series studying the songwriter's art.

AMSTERDAM — **"No, no, no,"** Bob Dylan says sharply when asked if aspiring songwriters should learn their craft by studying his albums, which is precisely what thousands have done for decades.

"It's only natural to pattern yourself after someone," he says, opening a door on a subject that has long been off-limits to reporters: his songwriting process. **"If I wanted to be a painter, I might think about trying to be like Van Gogh, or if I was an actor, act like Laurence Olivier. If I was an architect, there's Frank Gehry."**

"But you can't just copy somebody. If you like someone's work, the important thing is to be exposed to everything that person has been exposed to. Anyone who wants to be a songwriter should listen to as much folk music as they can, study the form and structure of stuff that has been around for 100 years. I go back to Stephen Foster."

For four decades, Dylan has been a grand American paradox: an artist who revolutionized popular songwriting with his nakedly personal yet challenging work but who keeps us at such distance from his private life — and his creative technique — that he didn't have to look far for the title of his recent movie: "*Masked and Anonymous*."

While fans and biographers might read his hundreds of songs as a chronicle of one man's love and loss, celebration and outrage, he doesn't revisit the stories behind the songs, per se, when he talks about his art this evening. What's more comfortable, and perhaps more interesting to him, is the way craft lets him turn life, ideas, observations and strings of poetic images into songs.

As he sits in the quiet of a grand hotel overlooking one of the city's picturesque canals, he paints a very different picture of his evolution as a songwriter than you might expect of an artist who seemed to arrive on the pop scene in the '60s with his vision and skills fully intact. Dylan's lyrics to "*Blowin' In The Wind*" were printed in *Broadside*, the folk music magazine, in May 1962, the month he turned 21.

The story he tells is one of trial and error, false starts and hard work — a young man in a remote stretch of Minnesota finding such freedom in the music of folk songwriter Woody Guthrie that he felt he could spend his life just singing Guthrie songs — until he discovered his true calling through a simple twist of fate.

Dylan has often said that he never set out to change pop songwriting or society, but it's clear he was filled with the high purpose of living up to the ideals he saw in Guthrie's work. Unlike rock stars before him, his chief goal wasn't just making the charts.

"I always admired true artists who were dedicated, so I learned from them," Dylan says, rocking slowly in the hotel room chair. **"Popular culture usually comes to an end very**

quickly. It gets thrown into the grave. I wanted to do something that stood alongside Rembrandt's paintings."

Even after all these years, his eyes still light up at the mention of Guthrie, the "Dust Bowl" poet, whose best songs, such as "*This Land Is Your Land,*" spoke so eloquently about the gulf Guthrie saw between America's ideals and its practices.

"To me, Woody Guthrie was the be-all and end-all," says Dylan, 62, his curly hair still framing his head majestically as it did on album covers four decades ago. **"Woody's songs were about everything at the same time. They were about rich and poor, black and white, the highs and lows of life, the contradictions between what they were teaching in school and what was really happening. He was saying everything in his songs that I felt but didn't know how to."**

"It wasn't only the songs, though. It was his voice — it was like a stiletto — and his diction. I had never heard anybody sing like that. His guitar strumming was more intricate than it sounded. All I knew was I wanted to learn his songs."

Dylan played so much Guthrie during his early club and coffeehouse days that he was dubbed a Woody Guthrie "jukebox." So imagine the shock when someone told him another singer — Ramblin' Jack Elliott — was doing that too. **"It's like being a doctor who has spent all these years discovering penicillin and suddenly** [finding out] **someone else had already done it,"** he recalls.

A less ambitious young man might have figured no big deal — there's plenty of room for two singers who admire Guthrie. But Dylan was too independent. **"I knew I had something that Jack didn't have,"** he says, **"though it took a while before I figured out what it was."**

Songwriting, he finally realized, was what could set him apart. Dylan had toyed with the idea earlier, but he felt he didn't have enough vocabulary or life experience.

Scrambling to distinguish himself on the New York club scene in 1961, though, he tried again. The first song of his own that drew attention to him was "*Song to Woody*," which included the lines, "*Hey, hey, Woody Guthrie... I know that you know / All the things that I'm a-sayin' an' a-many times more.*"

Within two years, he had written and recorded songs, including "*Girl of the North Country*" and "*A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*," that helped lift the heart of pop music from sheer entertainment to art.

'Songs Are the Star'

Dylan, whose work and personal life have been dissected in enough books to fill a library wall, seems to welcome the chance to talk about his craft, not his persona or history. It's as if he wants to demystify himself.

"To me, the performer is here and gone," he once said. **"The songs are the star of the show, not me."**

He also hates focusing on the past. **"I'm always trying to stay right square in the moment. I don't want to get nostalgic or narcissistic as a writer or a person. I think successful people don't dwell in the past. I think only losers do."**

Yet his sense of tradition is strong. He likes to think of himself as part of a brotherhood of writers whose roots are in the raw country, blues and folk strains of Guthrie, the Carter family, Robert Johnson and scores of Scottish and English balladeers.

Over the course of the evening, he offers glimpses into how his ear and eye put pieces of songs together using everything from Beat poetry and the daily news to lessons picked up from contemporaries.

He is so committed to talking about his craft that he has a guitar at his side in case he wants to demonstrate a point. When his road manager knocks on the door after 90 minutes to see if everything is OK, Dylan waves him off. After three hours, he volunteers to get together again after the next night's concert.

"There are so many ways you can go at something in a song," he says. **"One thing is to give life to inanimate objects. Johnny Cash is good at that. He's got the line that goes, '*A freighter said, "She's been here, but she's gone, boy, she's gone."*' That's great. '*A freighter says, "She's been here."*' That's high art. If you do that once in a song, you usually turn it on its head right then and there."**

The process he describes is more workaday than capturing lightning in a bottle. In working on "*Like A Rolling Stone*," he says, "**I'm not thinking about what I want to say, I'm just thinking 'Is this OK for the meter?'**"

But there's an undeniable element of mystery too. **"It's like a ghost is writing a song like that. It gives you the song and it goes away, it goes away. You don't know what it means. Except the ghost picked me to write the song."**

Some listeners over the years have complained that Dylan's songs are too ambiguous — that they seem to be simply an exercise in narcissistic wordplay. But most critics say Dylan's sometimes competing images are his greatest strength.

Few in American pop have consistently written lines as hauntingly beautiful and richly challenging as his "*Just Like a Woman*," a song from the mid-'60s:

She takes just like a woman, yes, she does
She makes love just like a woman, yes, she does
And she aches just like a woman
But she breaks
just like a little girl.

Dylan stares impassively at a lyric sheet for "*Just Like a Woman*" when it is handed to him. As is true of so many of his works, the song seems to be about many things at once.

"I'm not good at defining things," he says. **"Even if I could tell you what the song was about I wouldn't. It's up to the listener to figure out what it means to him."**

As he stares at the page in the quiet of the room, however, he budges a little. **"This is a very broad song. A line like, 'Breaks just like a little girl' is a metaphor. It's like a lot of blues-based songs. Someone may be talking about a woman, but they're not really talking about a woman at all. You can say a lot if you use metaphors."**

Nobody feels any pain
Tonight as I stand inside
the rain
Ev'rybody knows
That Baby's got new clothes
But lately I see her ribbons and her bows
Have fallen from her curls.

After another pause, he adds: **"It's a city song. It's like looking at something extremely powerful, say the shadow of a church or something like that. I don't think in lateral** [sic] **terms as a writer. That's a fault of a lot of the old Broadway writers. ... They are so lateral. There's no circular thing, nothing to be learned from the song, nothing to inspire you. I always try to turn a song on its head. Otherwise, I figure I'm wasting the listener's time."**

Discovering Folk Music

Dylan's pop sensibilities were shaped long before he made his journey east in the winter of 1960-61.

Growing up in the icy isolation of Hibbing, Minn., Dylan, who was still Robert Allen Zimmerman then, found comfort in the country, blues and early rock n' roll that he heard at night on a Louisiana radio station whose signal came in strong and clear. It was worlds away

from the local Hibbing station, which leaned toward mainstream pop like Perry Como, Frankie Laine and Doris Day.

Dylan has respect for many of the pre-rock songwriters, citing Cole Porter, whom he describes as a **"fearless"** rhymer, and Porter's *"Don't Fence Me In"* as a favorite. But he didn't feel most of the pre-rock writers were speaking to him.

"When you listened to [Porter's] **songs and the Gershwins' and Rodgers and Hammerstein, who wrote some great songs, they were writing for their generation and it just didn't feel like mine,"** he says. **"I realized at some point that the important thing isn't just how you write songs, but your subject matter, your point of view."**

The music that did speak to him as a teenager in the '50s was rock n' roll — especially Elvis Presley. **"When I got into rock n' roll, I didn't even think I had any other option or alternative,"** he says. **"It showed me where my future was, just like some people know they are going to be doctors or lawyers or shortstop for the New York Yankees."**

He became a student of what he heard.

"I wrote amazing songs that spun words together in a remarkably complex way," he says. **"Buddy Holly's songs were much more simplified, but what I got out of Buddy was that you can take influences from anywhere. Like his '*That'll Be the Day*.' I read somewhere that it was a line he heard in a movie, and I started realizing you can take things from everyday life that you hear people say."**

"That I still find true. You can go anywhere in daily life and have your ears open and hear something, either something someone says to you or something you hear across the room. If it has resonance, you can use it in a song."

After rock took on a blander tone in the late '50s, Dylan looked for new inspiration. He began listening to the Kingston Trio, who helped popularize folk music with polished versions of "*Tom Dooley*" and "*A Worried Man*." Most folk purists felt the group was more "pop" than authentic, but Dylan, new to folk, responded to the messages in the songs.

He worked his way through such other folk heroes as Odetta and Leadbelly before fixating on Guthrie. Trading his electric guitar for an acoustic one, he spent months in Minneapolis, performing in clubs, preparing himself for the trip east.

Going to New York rather than rival music center Los Angeles was a given, he says, **"because everything I knew came out of New York. I listened to the Yankees games on the radio, and the Giants and the Dodgers. All the radio programs, like '*The Fat Man*,' the NBC chimes — would be from New York. So were all the record companies. It seemed like New York was the capital of the world."**

Devouring Poetry

Dylan pursued his muse in New York with an appetite for anything he felt would help him improve his craft, whether it was learning old blues and folk songs or soaking up literature.

"I had read a lot of poetry by the time I wrote a lot of those early songs," he volunteers. **"I was into the hard-core poets. I read them the way some people read Stephen King. I had also seen a lot of it growing up. Poe's stuff knocked me out in more ways than I could name. Byron and Keats and all those guys. John Donne."**

"Byron's stuff goes on and on and on and you don't know half the things he's talking about or half the people he's addressing. But you could appreciate the language."

He found himself side by side with the Beat poets. **"The idea that poetry was spoken in the streets and spoken publicly, you couldn't help but be excited by that,"** he says. **"There would always be a poet in the clubs and you'd hear the rhymes, and** [Allen] **Ginsberg and** [Gregory] **Corso — those guys were highly influential."**

Dylan once said he wrote songs so fast in the '60s that he didn't want to go to sleep at night because he was afraid he might miss one. Similarly, he soaked up influences so rapidly that it was hard to turn off the light at night. Why not read more?

"Someone gave me a book of Francois Villon poems and he was writing about hard-core street stuff and making it rhyme," Dylan says, still conveying the excitement of tapping

into inspiration from 15th century France. **"It was pretty staggering, and it made you wonder why you couldn't do the same thing in a song."**

"I'd see Villon talking about visiting a prostitute and I would turn it around. I won't visit a prostitute, I'll talk about rescuing a prostitute. Again, it's turning stuff on its head, like 'vice is salvation and virtue will lead to ruin.'"

When you hear Dylan still marveling at lines such as the one above from Machiavelli or Shakespeare's *"fair is foul and foul is fair,"* you can see why he would pepper his own songs with phrases that forever ask us to question our assumptions — classic lines such as *"There's no success like failure and failure's no success at all,"* from 1965's "Love Minus Zero/No Limit."

As always, he's quick to give credit to the tradition.

"I didn't invent this, you know," he stresses. **"Robert Johnson would sing some song and out of nowhere there would be some kind of Confucius saying that would make you go, 'Wow, where did that come from?' It's important to always turn things around in some fashion."**

Exploring His Themes

Some writers sit down every day for two or three hours, at least, to write, whether they are in the mood or not. Others wait for inspiration. Dylan scoffs at the discipline of daily writing.

"Oh, I'm not that serious a songwriter," he says, a smile on his lips. **"Songs don't just come to me. They'll usually brew for a while, and you'll learn that it's important to keep the pieces until they are completely formed and glued together."**

He sometimes writes on a typewriter but usually picks up a pen because he says he can write faster than he can type. **"I don't spend a lot of time going over songs,"** Dylan says. **"I'll sometimes make changes, but the early songs, for instance, were mostly all first drafts."**

He doesn't insist that his rhymes be perfect. **"What I do that a lot of other writers don't do is take a concept and line I really want to get into a song and if I can't figure out for the life of me how to simplify it, I'll just take it all — lock, stock and barrel — and figure out how to sing it so it fits the rhyming scheme. I would prefer to do that rather than bust it down or lose it because I can't rhyme it."**

Themes, he says, have never been a problem. When he started out, the Korean War had just ended. **"That was a heavy cloud over everyone's head,"** he says. **"The communist thing was still big, and the civil rights movement was coming on. So there was lots to write about."**

"But I never set out to write politics. I didn't want to be a political moralist. There were people who just did that. Phil Ochs focused on political things, but there are many sides to us, and I wanted to follow them all. We can feel very generous one day and very selfish the next hour."

Dylan found subject matter in newspapers. He points to 1964's *"The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll,"* the story of a wealthy Baltimore man who was given only a six-month sentence for killing a maid with a cane. **"I just let the story tell itself in that song,"** he says. **"Who wouldn't be offended by some guy beating an old woman to death and just getting a slap on the wrist?"**

Other times, he was reacting to his own anxieties.

"A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" helped define his place in pop with an apocalyptic tale of a society being torn apart on many levels.

I heard the sound of a thunder, it roared out a warnin'
Heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world.
Heard one hundred drummers whose hands were a-blazin'
Heard ten thousand whisperin' and nobody listenin'...
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

The song has captured the imagination of listeners for generations, and like most of Dylan's songs, it has lyrics rich and poetic enough to defy age. Dylan scholars have often said the song was inspired by the Cuban missile crisis.

"All I remember about the missile crisis is there were bulletins coming across on the radio, people listening in bars and cafés, and the scariest thing was that cities, like Houston and Atlanta, would have to be evacuated. That was pretty heavy."

"Someone pointed out it was written before the missile crisis, but it doesn't really matter where a song comes from. It just matters where it takes you."

His Constant Changes

Dylan's career path hasn't been smooth. During an unprecedented creative spree that resulted in three landmark albums ("*Bringing It All Back Home*," "*Highway 61 Revisited*" and "*Blonde on Blonde*") being released in 15 months, Dylan reconnected with the rock n' roll of his youth. Impressed by the energy he felt in the Beatles and desiring to speak in the musical language of his generation, he declared his independence from folk by going electric at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965.

His music soon became a new standard of rock achievement, influencing not only his contemporaries, including the Beatles, but almost everyone to follow.

The pressure on him was soon so intense that he went underground for a while in 1966, not fully resuming his career until the mid-'70s when he did a celebrated tour with the Band and then recorded one of his most hailed albums, "*Blood on the Tracks*." By the end of the decade, he confused some old fans by turning to brimstone gospel music.

There were gems throughout the '70s and '80s, but Dylan seemed for much of the '90s to be tired of songwriting, or, maybe, just tired of always being measured against the standards he set in the '60s.

In the early '90s he seemed to find comfort only in the rhythm of the road, losing himself in the troubadour tradition, not even wanting to talk about songwriting or his future. **"Maybe I've written enough songs,"** he said then. **"Maybe it's someone else's turn."**

Somehow, however, all those shows reignited the songwriting spark — as demonstrated in his Grammy-winning "*Time Out of Mind*" album in 1997; the bittersweet song from the movie "*Wonder Boys*," "*Things Have Changed*," that won an Oscar in 2001 for best original song; and his heralded 2001 album, "*Love and Theft*." He spent much of last year working on a series of autobiographical chronicles. The first installment is due this fall from Simon & Schuster.

But nowhere, perhaps, is Dylan's regained passion more evident than in his live show, where he has switched primarily from guitar to electric keyboard and now leads his four-piece band with the intensity of a young punk auteur.

Dylan — who has lived in Southern California since he and ex-wife Sara Lowndes moved to Malibu in the mid-'70s with their five children — was in Amsterdam to headline two sold-out concerts at a 6,000-seat hall. He does more than 100 shows a year.

The audience on the chilly winter night after our first conversation is divided among people Dylan's age who have been following his career since the '60s and young people drawn to him by his classic body of work, and they call out for new songs, not just the classics.

Refiguring the Melodies

Back at the hotel afterward, Dylan looks about as satisfied as a man with his restless creative spirit can be.

It's nearly 2 a.m. by now and another pot of coffee cools. He rubs his hand through his curly hair. After all these hours, I realize I haven't asked the most obvious question: Which comes first, the words or the music?

Dylan leans over and picks up the acoustic guitar.

"Well, you have to understand that I'm not a melodist," he says. **"My songs are either based on old Protestant hymns or Carter family songs or variations of the blues form."**

"What happens is, I'll take a song I know and simply start playing it in my head. That's the way I meditate. A lot of people will look at a crack on the wall and meditate, or count sheep or angels or money or something, and it's a proven fact that it'll help them relax. I don't meditate on any of that stuff. I meditate on a song."

"I'll be playing Bob Nolan's '*Tumbling Tumbleweeds*,' for instance, in my head constantly — while I'm driving a car or talking to a person or sitting around or whatever. People will think they are talking to me and I'm talking back, but I'm not. I'm listening to the song in my head. At a certain point, some of the words will change and I'll start writing a song."

He's slowly strumming the guitar, but it's hard to pick out the tune.

"I wrote '*Blowin' in the Wind*' in 10 minutes, just put words to an old spiritual, probably something I learned from Carter Family records. That's the folk music tradition. You use what's been handed down. '*The Times They Are A-Changin'*' is probably from an old Scottish folk song."

As he keeps playing, the song starts sounding vaguely familiar.

I want to know about "*Subterranean Homesick Blues*," one of his most radical songs. The 1965 number fused folk and blues in a way that made everyone who heard it listen to it over and over. John Lennon once said the song was so captivating on every level that it made him wonder how he could ever compete with it.

The lyrics, again, were about a society in revolution, a tale of drugs and misuse of authority and trying to figure out everything when little seemed to make sense:

Johnny's in the basement
Mixing up the medicine
I'm on the pavement
Thinking about the government

The music too reflected the paranoia of the time — roaring out of the speakers at the time with a cannonball force.

Where did that come from?

Without pause, Dylan says, almost with a wink, that the inspiration dates to his teens. **"It's from Chuck Berry, a bit of "Too Much Monkey Business" and some of the scat songs of the '40s."**

As the music from the guitar gets louder, you realize Dylan is playing one of the most famous songs of the 20th century, Irving Berlin's "*Blue Skies*."

You look into his eyes for a sign.

Is he writing a new song as we speak?

"No," he says with a smile. **"I'm just showing you what I do."**

Robert Hilburn, the Times pop music critic, can be reached at Robert.hilburn@latimes.com

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Dylan's Minnesota Farm,
John Preston Interview for *Sunday Telegraph*

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'I wasn't the toastmaster of any generation and that notion has to be pulled up by the roots'
Bob Dylan has spent his life hiding behind carefully erected smokescreens. But now the most enigmatic of rock legends is ready to talk. JOHN PRESTON caught up with him, at his Minnesota ranch, for the first interview he has given to a British newspapers in 20 years.

When it was announced two years ago that Bob Dylan was writing his autobiography, there was general astonishment among his legions of obsessive fans. Here, after all, was a man who has spent his life hiding behind carefully erected smokescreens of privacy and elusiveness. While other rock stars may have spilled details of their albums, their affairs and their addictions with delirious abandon, Dylan has always kept his public utterances to a gnomic few. All across the Internet questions flew back and forth. Would Dylan ever complete the book? How were his powers of recall? And perhaps most critically – particularly for anyone who has attempted to read Dylan's only other published work, his 1971 novel, *Tarantula* – would it make any sense?

But Dylan hasn't spent more than 40 years wrong footing people for nothing. Not only did he deliver *Chronicles Volume One* on time, but it turns out to be a remarkable book, richly atmospheric and full of insights into his work, along with vivid impressions from his life.

Then came another surprise: Dylan was prepared to talk, to give his first interview to a British newspaper in 20 years. And there was one more shock in store. Normally interviews with Bob Dylan tend to be tortuous affairs, full of yawning silences and mumbling evasions. But when I spoke to him at his farm in Minnesota where Dylan has been taking a rare break from performing, he confounded expectations by being friendly, relaxed and only too happy to chew the fat and reminisce.

He was quick to point out that it wasn't actually his idea to write the book. Rather, his publisher suggested it and despite a few misgivings he decided to have a try. **"In part, I guess I wanted to set the record straight,"** he says in his light, mid-western accent, **"I knew there had been other books about me and I'd even read a couple of them – although – frankly you can't spend time reading books about yourself, no matter who you are."**

"Some of the books were more accurate than others, but no one knew the full story, apart from me. So I sat down and started tapping away on my old manual typewriter. Initially the book was going to be about the background to some of my albums, but then it took on a life of its own. The chapters about my early days in New York were supposed to be about how I recorded my second album, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. But somehow I never quite got there. Every few weeks I'd send off some pages to my publisher and ask if they thought they were usable. They seemed happy and so I just kept on going."

Dylan found writing *Chronicles* a very strange experience. **"For a start I'm used to writing songs and I use a lot of symbol and metaphor. People can misinterpret that. But here I was determined to write a book that no one could misinterpret. It was difficult, though. Writing a song is a more straightforward process: you go verse, chorus, verse, chorus, and pretty soon you're done. With a book you can't use the same dynamics."**

But Dylan's main problem – at least to begin with – was that he wasn't sure how reliable his memory would prove to be. **"However, as I wrote, my memory seemed to unlock. I surprised myself with how much came back. I found I could visualise what people looked like and what they were wearing and even how particular rooms were furnished."**

The book starts with Dylan freshly arrived in New York from Minnesota, and being signed up by Columbia records. At Columbia, he was taken under the wing of one of the label's most respected producers, John Hammond, who had only heard two of Dylan's original songs, **"but he had a premonition there would be more"**.

From the word go, Dylan hung up a large mask between himself and the world. He changed his name, partly in tribute to the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas – in the past Dylan has always denied naming himself after Thomas, but now he seems happy to acknowledge his influence. He also changed his background. When people asked him where he'd come from and how he'd arrived, he claimed to have ridden into New York City on a freight train.

In fact, as he admits with a chuckle, he had driven in from the Midwest in a four-door 1957 sedan. But there could be no doubting his determination to succeed. Apart from anything else, he felt he had been singled out by destiny.

"I did have that feeling; I'd had it since I was a kid, you know. I grew up in a very isolated place and throughout my boyhood years I felt like I was like a dog hunting in dreams, always looking for something, although I wasn't sure what exactly. But from the start I had this absolute confidence. While I didn't know how I was going to get there, it didn't surprise me when I did. If I hadn't have had that confidence, I would have gone off and done something else."

Dylan was born in 1941 and brought up in the iron-ore mining town of Hibbing. When he was a boy his heroes, he recalls, were Robin Hood and St George, the Dragon Slayer. His Jewish seamstress grandmother, whom he plainly adored, had emigrated from Odessa in Russia, losing a leg along the way. Originally his father, Abe, who worked for the Standard Oil Company, wanted his son to become a mechanical engineer. Dylan, however, had, other ideas. At one stage, he insists he thought seriously about enrolling in the army and going to West Point. **"Yeah, that was something I'd forgotten all about, but then it came back to me as I was writing."**

Instead of West Point, Dylan headed south for New York City. As he describes it, the New York of the early 1960s sounds like a Greenwich Village version of *La Boheme*, full of blazingly intense intellectuals hanging about in book-lined lofts and smoky folk clubs.

It was a world apart from anything he'd been used to in Hibbing, and Dylan plunged into it with ravenous zeal. At a friend's apartment, he devoured books – Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, even the 19th-century Prussian General, Karl Clausewift's treatise on military strategy – cramming his head full of anything he could pick up. **"A lot of these books were too big to read,"** he recalls, **"like giant shoes fitted for large-footed people."**

Soon Dylan was performing in the folk clubs, modelling himself on his great idol, Woody Guthrie. At the time Guthrie was dying with Huntingdon's chorea in Greystone Hospital, a sanatorium in New Jersey. Eager to meet his hero, Dylan went to see him. **"He had no idea who I was when I first turned up. But very few people were going to see him then. Hardly anyone even knew who he was, certainly not in the sanatorium. I never saw any other visitors there. I don't think he was lonely necessarily, but he seemed to like my company. I must have**

gone to see him about a dozen times. I'd bring him cigarettes, play songs and we'd just talk about this and that. It was a terrible place; like an asylum really. I always found it very draining psychologically going there."

Meanwhile, the Greenwich Village folk devotees weren't too sure what to make of Dylan. **"Basically, folk performers fell into one of two categories. Either they were commercial and had highly stylised nightclub acts, or else they did southern mountain music. But I didn't do either of those things. I came from a rock n' roll background, although I did my best to hide that because I knew they'd be disapproving."**

Under Guthrie's influence, Dylan began writing his own songs. **"I had a similar sense of destiny there. In one sense, writing songs was a gradual process and yet in another it seemed to happen very quickly. Over the course of a year I started writing a lot, but the experience I'd already had stood me in good stead. I'd learned a lot by the time I started writing my first songs."**

In September 1961, the critic Robert Shelton, writing in the *New York Times* reviewed a concert that Dylan had given at Gerde's Folk City. "*His clothes may need a bit of tailoring, but when he works his guitar, harmonica, or piano and composes new songs faster than he can remember them, there is no doubt that he is bursting at the seams with talent.*"

A year later Dylan had written his great anti-war anthem, *Blowin' in the Wind*. It was the first in what was to be an extraordinarily long line of classic songs. But as soon as he'd mastered one form, Dylan was keen to move on, to experiment with new structures and instrumentation. Within four years he appeared to have left folk music behind. At the 1965 Newport Folk Festival he played the electric guitar while outraged folk fans in the audience tried to boo him offstage.

"In retrospect," he says, **"I think it was very hard to domesticate and tame my talent. However, some people seemed to think that listening to songs should be like listening to dull sermons. I didn't want anything like that. But at the same time I felt very much a part of the folk music tradition. All the lyrics I wrote came out of that idiom."**

It was a tradition that Dylan insists he never wanted to break with, even when he went electric, and as he puts it wryly, **"gathered some notoriety I always kept in touch with older musicians, people in their fifties and sixties, like Mississippi John Hurt. Hard-core rural folksingers. They understood the complexity of my language and what I was trying to do. They didn't have any problem with it."**

Throughout the 1960s, Dylan's fame and reputation continued to escalate, to the point where he was constantly being referred to as "the spokesman of his generation". It was a label he detested; he'd never sought such a role and he found the pressure of people's expectations increasingly hard to bear.

"Not only did I not want it, but I didn't need it. I couldn't understand it either. None of us like to be defined by what other people think of us. I wasn't the toastmaster of any generation and that notion had to be pulled up by the roots."

All he wanted, he says, was to be left alone with his wife and children enjoying **"a nine-to-five existence with a white picket fence and pink roses in the backyard. That would have been nice"**.

Following a motorcycle accident in July 1966, he fled to Woodstock in upstate New York in an effort to put some distance between himself and his would-be disciples. But the fans, along with the mayhem, quickly followed. Soon, maps were being sold showing where Dylan's home was. Whenever he went out to a restaurant, the whole place would fall silent and everyone would start staring at him.

"It all turned into a nightmare," he remembers. In the end things got so bad that Dylan – ostensibly the great pacifist – was reduced to keeping guns in his house in case he and his family were attacked.

I wondered if he'd actually come close to having a nervous breakdown at the time. **"I guess I did. None the less, you have to try to get on with your life and do the best you can. But it was terrible and also very disorientating. In the early years everything had been like a magic carpet ride for me – and then all at once it was over. Here was this thing that I'd wanted to do all my life, but suddenly I didn't feel I could do it anymore."**

"Also, I was changing too. Now I had a wife and kids and different responsibilities. I realised I had to try to settle for another type of life; to take enjoyment out of little things. A lot about fame tastes good, or can do. Apart from anything else, you can use it to do a lot of good. But I wasn't seeing any of that back then."

For several years Dylan took himself out of the limelight. His marriage to Sara Lowndes fell apart and he concentrated on trying to bring up his four children. **"I remember thinking that art was sublime excrement, and I decided to turn my back on it for a while."**

Creatively, he foundered. He describes the experience as like being in a long dark tunnel. When I asked him how long it took him to emerge from the tunnel, he sighs and says, **"Oh, a long time... But I got there in the end."**

It was in the 1980s that Dylan hit his lowest ebb. His record sales plummeted and so did the quality of his live shows. Audiences stayed away, put off by Dylan's ramblingly atonal delivery and his apparent indifference to his own material. **"In reality,"** he says, **"I was just above a club act."**

Unsure what direction to follow and unable to write any new songs, he found his old ones hanging heavy round his neck. **"I was carrying a package of rotting meat... The glow was gone and the match had burned right to the end. I was going through the motions. The whisky had gone out of the bottle."**

For a he thought seriously about quitting, never recording or performing again. Then one evening in a bar he saw an old jazz singer whose style of performing came as a revelation to him. **"Suddenly, it was like this guy had an open window to my soul."** All at once he saw how he could sing with his voice **"bypassing"** his brain, and **"blasting up from the bottom of my lower self"**.

From then on, things began to improve – slowly at first, and then with gathering momentum. His 1989 album, *Oh Mercy*, was hailed as his best in years. His next, *Time Out Of Mind* won him a Grammy for album of the year in 1997, and *Things Have Changed*, the song he wrote for the 2000 film *Wonderboys* won him as Oscar. Dylan was so delighted with his Oscar that lie took to carrying it on stage with him and displaying it to his audience.

It was in the late 1980s that Dylan embarked on what soon became known as The Never Ending Tour – and he's been more or less on it ever since, criss-crossing the globe, playing about 150 concerts a year and seldom stopping for more than a month at a time.

I asked him if he thought he could ever have felt fulfilled if he had retired. **"I'm not really sure. I think I would have missed the performing. I feel I need to perform more than I need to write. Having said that, though, I do get caught up in writing. Every time I come up with a new song it's like the first rose of May."**

A few years ago after he had been hospitalised for a heart condition Dylan said that **"any day above ground was a good day"** as far as he was concerned. But life has looked up a good deal since then. His last album, *Love and Theft*, released in 2001, was hailed as one of the best things he has ever done. Now here he is, aged 63, a grandfather several times over, trawling through his back pages for what he says will eventually be a three-volume autobiography.

"I found writing the first volume quite an emotional experience in places. But then I'd put it aside and not look at it for a while. To be honest, I also found it quite a tedious process. I'm not a professional writer and I just didn't get that sense of exhilaration that some writers feel. But I guess I'll keep on going. I've certainly got a lot more things to write about."

There was one other question I wanted to ask. However much Dylan may hate being labelled as a spokesman of any kind, it's something he can never shake off completely. So did he think that the United States and Britain should have invaded Iraq?

Dylan barks with loud wheezy laughter. **"Maybe I'll tackle that in the next book."**

October 2004
Steve Inskeep interview for National Public Radio

Source: *Circulating tape*

What follows is a transcription of the radio program broadcast on NPR on October 12th, 2004:

One of Bob Dylan's most famous songs includes the singer asking his recording engineer if the tape is on.

Is it rolling, Bob?

A few days ago Bob Dylan began what is believed to be his first broadcast interview in nineteen years. The conversation started about the same way.

BD: Is the tape on?

SI: Tape's on.

This most private of musicians spent most of the 1960s fleeing his rabid fans. Now, at the age of 63, he's writer a memoir. It's called "*Chronicles, Vol. 1*".

Dylan started by writing about his old recording sessions.

BD: As you can see by the way it is written, you can say just about anything you want… um… or I can anyway if I put it in the context of what was happening when I was making these records.

In the course of writing about recording sessions, Bob Dylan ended up telling a good chuck of his life story, flipping back and forth in time. On one page it's the winter of 1961. He's a young man, in New York City, making demo tapes, and waiting for a shot at fame.

He went on to become one of the most influential songwriters of the 1960s. On another page, Dylan is a burnt-out rock star who can no longer feel the power of his own songs.

I'm going back to New York City, I do believe I've had enough…

That moment came in the mid 1980's.

BD: I did some tours with the Tom Petty Band, and then I did a short tour with The Grateful Dead and as you could probably expect I really didn't feel like my heart was in it much any more.

SI: You seem to suggest that even some of your own best songs were alien to you, hard to play.

BD: That's true. If you talk to any of the people who were around me at that time, I couldn't quite reach the meaning in the whole pantheon of the songs which I'd written. I thought maybe they didn't hold up conceptually or something like that. Or maybe the music scene had passed me by.

SI: And so what happened when you had the sessions with members of The Grateful Dead and they were urging you to play songs that you hadn't played in a while?

BD: **They always had seemed to have known my stuff in a lotta ways deeper than me. They found great meaning in those songs, they could play them pretty accurately, but I couldn't do that.**

Bob Dylan says that he'd fled the room rather than talk about playing the songs he couldn't relate to any more. He might not have ever gone back, might even have ended his career, except, he says, that he walked into a bar and he was inspired by a jazz group playing inside.

BD: You know, a lot happened for me when I walked in and heard them. I felt like I could do something again. I fixed on something that I hadn't had for many, many years.
SI: You just heard this little combo playing
BD: Uh-ha. It was the singer who got to me there. I mean those thing happen sometimes mostly tho… but when they do happen they happen to a person when they're much younger.
Bob Dylan was in his 40's. He returned to playing his old music. Restored his confidence, and went on to record '*Oh Mercy*', an acclaimed album that was seen as a comeback.
Why have you continued for years now playing… well, probably more than a hundred dates a year, right?
A-ha. Well, because, you know, I don't really feel like anybody else's doing what I do. That's probably the longest short of it right there.
In his memoir, Bob Dylan adds another detail. He says he wanted to start touring constantly in hope that he would be discovered by a new audience. Of the fans who'd followed him since the 1960s, declaring that his every word was Shakespearean poetry, Bob Dylan writes, **"In many ways, this audience was past its prime, and its reflexes were shot."**
Why does it bother you when people sometimes refer to you as a "voice of your generation"?
I think that was just a term that could create problems for somebody, especially if someone just wants to keep it simple, write songs and play them. Having these colossal accolades and titles, they get in the way.

You say that it made it harder for you to just do your job?

Oh yeah, absolutely.

I guess it's your fault 'cause you went and wrote all those lyrics that a lot of people think speak to them

BD: [laughs] **Yeah, but… and that's okay. When it becomes a problem it's like… when we're getting known outside of our field, then we are known by people who don't really know… who never had any experience with what we do or… we're just names. You know, sometimes a person's reputation can be far more colossal than the influence of that person. I don't pay any attention to it anymore, so I was trying to reconstruct the theory of what it does feel like to… to have anything like thrown at you when you expected to be something that you know you're not.**

Have you come to some places in your career when you considered quitting?

BD: [laughs]
SI: You've worked through them…
BD: Every day.
SI: Every day, really?
BD: Yeah… oh, why not? You know… [laughs] I don't know
SI: Well, do you think you might just quit? Or take up painting? Joni Mitchell…
BD: Yeah…

A couple of years ago said I'm gonna take up painting and give up music.

BD: I understand her. I know why she would do that. I know why I would do it. If I could find something that somebody mighta interested me to do, I mean I think I've pretty much done what I, you know,

SI: Well, you know people will be listening to this interview, you got any marketable skills you wanna tell people about

BD: Well, I can sail a boat and fly a plane [laughs]

SI: Bob Dylan is the author of *Chronicles, Vol. One*. it's been a lot of fun talking to you, thanks very much.

BD: Okay, thank you.

4 October 2004
Edna Gundersen Interview for *USA Today*

DYLAN CHRONICLES HIS JOURNEY
Memoir of folk's troubadour doesn't get tangled up in personal details.
By Edna Gundersen,
USA TODAY

For more than four decades, fans have searched for the man behind the myth and the music.

They scrutinized enigmatic lyrics on his 43 albums and puzzled over evasive comments in rare interviews. His abstract poetry in Tarantula and sketches in Drawn Blank only enhanced the riddle, while a vast library of unauthorized biographies tended to blur his identity with conflicting theories and agendas. He remained a closed book.

Until now. Another side of Bob Dylan emerges today in *Chronicles: Volume One* (Simon & Schuster, $24), a candid memoir that pulls the veil of mystique from pop culture's reluctant icon to reveal a creative giant unlocking his destiny. He tells his story, but he's not calling it an autobiography.

"I don't exactly know what that word means anyway, so I don't think I'd be up to that task," Dylan, 63, says in a phone interview.

After reviewing Dylan's unpublished notes on early albums, Simon & Schuster publisher David Rosenthal suggested he write about specific periods rather than undertake a life story.

"I understood that strategy," says Dylan, who says he wrote *Chronicles* to share key recollections, not to amend errors by other authors. **"I didn't feel like I had to counteract anything. I maybe had to put to rest a lot of superstitions, but it wasn't like it troubled me to write the book. I didn't have to write an apology. I wasn't trying to explain anything to anybody. I was intrigued by the whole process with words and how they would flow and with how certain people would light up my memory. I was just trying to charm my way through it, really."**

Dylan's memory yielded richly detailed anecdotes, events and conversations. Using a vintage Remington typewriter, he wrote off and on for the past three years, completing entire sections in single sittings **"because if I stopped, I didn't want to have to go back and read it."**

The articulate, well-read but private singer found *Chronicles* far more challenging than songwriting.

"Writing a song is what I can do and know how to do and need to do," he says. **"I'm surprised anybody gets a book out. I use a lot of metaphors and symbolism in songs, and they're based on rhythmic value. Obviously, you can't do that when you're writing a manuscript, which has to make literal sense. I had to regulate my imagination; I couldn't just wander all over the place."**

"I can't say I liked the process. When I write a song, it stays in my mind for a brief period, and I don't have to connect it to the next song. When I'm writing a song, I feel like I'm still living life. With a book like this, it occurs to you after a while that you're really not living life. You're trying to put it on pages in a typewriter. I don't mean to sound like I wrote the book by an oil lamp, but I did feel like I was closing myself off."

In 293 pages, Dylan recounts his youth in Minnesota, his early days as a performer on the folk circuit in Greenwich Village and the creation of 1970's *New Morning* and 1989's *Oh Mercy*.

Salient details emerge. As a teen captivated by military history, he briefly yearned to attend West Point. Born Robert Allen Zimmerman, he tried on stage names, including Elston Gunn. After discovering poet Dylan Thomas, he considered Bobby Dylan (rejected because of

other Bobbys — Vee, Darin, Rydell). He thought Bob Allyn sounded like a used-car salesman, so he settled on Bob Dylan.

In New York, Dylan's talent flowered as he hungrily explored the city's arts and colorful characters, from boxer Jack Dempsey to folkie Dave Van Ronk.

"Everything had a different gratification and delight back then," he says, reflecting on gigs at Café Wha? and the Gaslight. **"That's when I was coming up as a performer. My life hadn't been filled with too many mistakes leading up to that. As time went on, things began to scratch and sting. All of a sudden, the magic carpet got yanked away."**

Dylan's stardom brought media scrutiny and unwelcome canonization as a protest prophet. He retreated to Woodstock to raise a family, dodge his stalkers and shed the millstone of '60s messiah.

"When I was in Woodstock, it became very clear to me that the whole counterculture was one big scarecrow wearing dead leaves," he says. **"It had no purpose in my life. It's been true ever since, actually."**

While Dylan insists no topic was off limits in *Chronicles*, he barely acknowledges his 1966 motorcycle accident and avoids mention of his divorce and conversion to Christianity in the late '70s.

"That would fall under the category of what doesn't matter," he says. **"If somebody wanted me to write an article about my motorcycle accident, I'm sure I could come up with one, but what's the point? In no way is the book an open confession. It was never intended to be. The confessional stuff is OK if you do the penance along with it, but that was never my intention."**

"Confessional stuff" apparently includes naming wives and children, which he studiously avoids.

"Personal details are important if they move the story along, but these chronicles are nothing more than shaking down the tree of life and seeing what comes out," Dylan says. **"Those things didn't come out. I'm in possession of those things, but I don't think that's enough to really excite a reader. I could have been more nasty and sultry if I wanted to be, but there wasn't any reason."**

Dylan expounds with gusto on his musical odyssey, outlining his influences, his growth as a performer and songwriter, his models and collaborators. Folk music was the fulcrum, but Dylan also found inspiration in jazz and blues, train whistles and church bells, in newspapers and literature. He read Balzac, Faulkner, Byron, Pushkin, Milton, Shelley, Poe and Dickens.

"I went to it on my own," he says. **"I was into the folk-song language, and intuitively I knew all these books would enrich the human mind. People I was meeting in the late '50s and early '60s were much older than me. They all had books on their shelves. Up till that time I'd probably just seen comic books. In high school, I'd read Sir Walter Scott, and my favorite books were *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Ben-Hur*. The folk songs were all beer and Bibles and rum. It seemed to me that all those words on the shelf led to a different kind of glory."**

Chronicles' happiest passages dwell on exploring and sharing music. The tone sours when fame and battle fatigue set in. After a serious hand injury and while on tour in the mid-'80s, Dylan writes, **"I felt done for, an empty burned-out wreck ... I'm a '60s troubadour, a folk-rock relic ... I'm in the bottomless pit of cultural oblivion."**

Spent and uninspired, Dylan pondered retirement.

"It was just a misdirection of my talent," Dylan says. **"It burned itself out at that time. I would not have called it a creative slump. I had horse-whipped myself so bad, and I was critically hurt in so many ways, I really didn't have much more to say at that point."**

As it turns out, Dylan had plenty left to say. His latest albums, 2001's *Love and Theft* and 1997's *Time Out of Mind*, rank among his classics. He has written songs for his next studio album, which he'll tackle after completing a U.S. tour in November. A restless troubadour, Dylan keeps his songs alive on stage. When he takes his final bow, those tunes won't leave the spotlight.

"They're not worth much if they don't have permanence," he says. **"A lot of them will last. A lot of them won't. I came to terms with that a long time back. What made my songs different, and still does, is I can create several orbits that travel and intersect each other and are set up in a metaphysical way. They all came out of the folk music pantheon, and those songs have lasted. So if my songs were written correctly and eloquently, there's no reason they wouldn't last."**

Whether *Chronicles* has a long shelf life is less certain.

"I was just happy when I turned it all in and they agreed it was good enough to put out and I wouldn't have to do any more," Dylan says, laughing. He's in no rush to plunge into a second volume. He's quick to add that he didn't approach Chronicles as a vanity project.

"In a lot of ways, this is written like I play," he says. **"There's a certain section of my mind that is playing for people who've never heard of me or never heard my songs. In the same way, I don't have to trade on my reputation to write a book. It can't stand if it's only written for people who know about me or are familiar with my work. This book has to reach people who might not have heard my name before."**

4 October 2004
David Gates Interview for *Newsweek*

BOB DYLAN OPENS UP

EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT: In a Startling Memoir, The Reclusive Legend Reveals His Real Feelings About the '60s

Cover Story
He is the emblem of an era, the voice of a generation. But in a revealing new memoir, Bob Dylan says nobody ever asked him if he wanted to play those roles. In an exclusive interview with NEWSWEEK and excerpt from the book, the musician talks candidly about fame, family, art, the 60s and his journeys through modern celebrity.

THE BOOK OF BOB

Bob Dylan is about to publish a remarkably candid, long-awaited memoir. He gave us the first excerpt, and we sat down for an extraordinarily wide-ranging talk.
BY DAVID GATES

WHEN I TELL BOB DYLAN he's the last person I'd have expected to turn autobiographer, he laughs and says, **"Yeah, me too."** It's not just that he guards his privacy so carefully that he's arranged to meet in a motel room someplace in the Midwest—which is all he'd like us to specify—to talk about his forthcoming book, "*Chronicles, Volume One.*" (Dylan supposedly got in without being spotted, but there's a funny vibe here. Why is our pot of coffee on the house?) His early public persona was built on self-protectively enigmatic statements and artful misdirection, like the yarns he used to tell about being a traveling carny; even Robert Zimmerman's stage name was an invention. And the songs that made Dylan so burdensomely famous—exhibit A, "*Like a Rolling Stone*" with Miss Lonely, her diplomat and the Siamese cat on his shoulder—seemed to tell his personal truth, and a lot of other people's, by means of surreal evasion. **"I'm used to writing songs,"** he says, **"and songs—I can fill 'em up with symbolism and metaphors. When you write a book like this, you gotta tell the truth, and it can't be misinterpreted."** He's clearly proud of the book, but he didn't enjoy writing the thing. At all. **"Lest we forget, while you're writing, you're not living. What do they call it? Splendid isolation? I don't find it that splendid."**

Dylan, 63, looks younger and healthier than he did when I spoke with him in 1997, the year his spooky, world-weary album "*Time Out of Mind*" re-established him as a vital contemporary—after what he claims was a quarter century of artistic "downward spiral"—and introduced him to a new generation of listeners. Back then, he was just recovering from a near-fatal infection of the tissues around his heart. Now, sitting at a small table with a view of the parking lot, sad little suburban trees and a lowering sky, he seems like a wiry kid eager to get outdoors—but he's also perfectly happy, as before, to shoot the breeze about music. **"When I was talking to you earlier"** he begins—as if it had been a couple of hours ago, rather than seven years. He gives a shout-out to Elvis Costello (**"'*Everyday I Write the Book*'—I just did that"**) and to Carole King: **"'*You've Got a Friend*' on some level means more to me than a lot of my songs do."** He testifies to his admiration for Bing Crosby and for Willie Nelson, his informed skepticism about hip-hop (**"There's a lot of clever minds behind that, no question about it. But you know, less is more"**), and his overall pessimism about the present-day scene: **"I don't think music is ever going to be the same as what it meant to us. You hear it, but you don't hear it."** Like all modernists, he's a nostalgic—what else would you be modernist about?— but he's clearly excited about his own recent music. These days, he says, with that

familiar rising inflection, **"I'm sort of doing what I want to do? I mean not sort of what I want to do, I am doing what I want to do. Or what I believe I was put here to do."** He's got six or eight songs toward a new album, and he hopes to finish more before he goes back on the road next month. Then he wants to start re-recording many of his old songs, this time **"with the proper structures. A lot of these songs can have, like, a dozen different structures to them. I can't hope to do all that. But I can provide a few things for future generations."** He takes another sip from his Styrofoam cup.

"*Chronicles*" which will be in stores Oct 5, may have been a detour from Dylan's real work: it occupied him on and off for three years, writing on a manual typewriter in capital letters, to make it easier for an assistant to read and retype. But it's hardly an arty curiosity like his post-Beat, all-lowercase 1966 novel "*Tarantula*." It's an attempt by the most influential cultural figure now alive—no? who else?—to give us a straightforward look at his life. It comes along, coincidentally, at a moment when mainstream literary writers are busy arguing for Dylan's importance: in the British critic Christopher Ricks's study "*Dylan's Visions of Sin*," and soon in "*Studio A*" a collection of pieces on Dylan by the likes of Jonathan Lethem, Rick Moody and Sam Shepard, as well as Dylan himself. (Simon & Schuster has also issued an updated collection of Dylan's lyrics—and Scribner has reprinted "*Tarantula*.") "*Chronicles,*" written at the urging of Simon & Schuster publisher David Rosenthal, is neither a cradle-to-one-foot-in-the-grave autobiography nor a true memoir, tightly focused on a single crucial period. Instead, as Dylan puts it, **"It's like I had a full deck, and I cut the cards and whatever you see you go with that. I realize there's a great gap in it."** What he saw ended up as an evocation of his early days in Greenwich Village, chapters on the genesis of two lesser-known albums, "*New Morning*" (1970) and "*Oh Mercy*" (1989), and a section on his forced retreat from his own celebrity. (It's the subject of the exclusive excerpt that follows this piece.) The Biblical title Rosenthal suggested made intuitive sense to Dylan.

"'*Chronicles*' just means—I'm not sure what it means"—he laughs—**"but it would seem to be some kind of thing where you can make right use of the past."**

Critics may complain that the book doesn't include the back pages they want most: his famous 1966 motorcycle accident gets a single sentence, and there's nothing about his 1977 divorce, his 1978 conversion to evangelical Christianity or the origin and the making of such master-works as "*Blood on the Tracks*" (1975), "*Slow Train Coming*" (1979), "*Infidels*" (1983) or "*Time Out of Mind.*" (He did write about "*Blood on the Tracks*"; that chapter, and much more that he's written, may appear in subsequent volumes—**"When I slink into the corner, maybe"**) But Dylan has a different sense of priorities. **"I mean, I'm in possession of what really matters."** And one thing that seems to matter overwhelmingly is other people. He's written sharp-eyed portraits of everyone from the poet Archibald MacLeish— who wanted Dylan to collaborate on a musical play—to the opium-smoking bohemian couple who put him up in the Village. Jack Dempsey even gets a cameo on the first page. **"You know how I would remember stuff? I would remember people,"** he says. **"Once I figured out who was there, I could make something of it. I didn't go strong on anybody, you know? I think I went rather light. But in saying that, I'm not a big fan of polite literature, so there would have to be an edge to it."** Dylan's songs have always teemed with people, from the real-life Hattie Carroll and Hurricane Carter to such indelible figures as the clueless Mr. Jones in "*Ballad of a Thin Man*" and the back-stabbing wanna-be in "*Positively Fourth Street.*" But "*Chronicles*" should dispel any notion that Dylan spends his real life exclusively absorbed in the splendid isolation of his private visions. While everybody was obsessively watching Dylan, he was watching them.

There's always been something uniquely strange about Dylan's fame, the often-creepy intensity with which people have been drawn to him—or rather, to his mystique. **"The songs definitely had a lot to do with it,"** he says. Well, yeah. It went dangerously past ordinary adulation. At its worst, in the late 1960s and early '70s, Dylan experienced a disorienting, terrifying and downright infuriating combination of stalking and deification. As he writes in "*Chronicles*" **"It would have driven anybody mad"**—and it goes a long way toward explaining

why arranging for an interview with him still feels like setting up a meeting to pass nuclear secrets.

As Dylan sees it, his fame distorted not only his life but his art; he reacted to it with new music calculated to baffle expectations, and he ended up baffling himself. **"I didn't know what it was I was really doing. I was going on reputation. Which buys you a certain sum, but you're not in control. And until you gain control, you're never quite sure you're doing the right thing? In my case anyway? So I went for a long time precisely on that fame that we're talking about. But—it was like a bag of wind. I didn't realize it was slipping away until it had slipped away."** And how long did this go on? **"Artistically speaking, it would have to have begun sometime in Woodstock—not personally, but in a public way—till maybe when that '*Time Out of Mind*' record came out."** I command myself to keep my mouth shut. He's talking about the 25 years that produced "*Blood on the Tracks,*" "*Slow Train Coming,*" "*Shot of Love,*" "*Infidels*" and its sublime outtakes, and—no. Let's not argue with the man who's in possession of what really matters. I take another sip from my cup. A china cup. Not being Bob Dylan, I had no problem making a run to the restaurant down the hall, though the coffee was still on the house.

Outside the window, rain's now falling on the parking lot. Dylan must have seen so many of these gloomy Midwestern days when he was growing up in northern Minnesota. The photo on the cover of "*Chronicles*" shows Times Square in 1961, the year he came to New York, but as a kid, he says, **"I had no idea of what a city was like. And I think it probably made me who I am today. The country where I came from—it's pretty bleak. And it's cold. And there's a lot of water. So you could dream a lot. The difference between me now and then is that back then, I could see visions. The me now can dream dreams."** His early songs, he says, were visionary, however much they drew on his meticulous observation of the real world around him. **"What you see in 'Chronicles' is a dream,"** he says. **"It's already happened."**

You would have to be Bob Dylan—which is what all those stalkers must ultimately have wanted from him—to grasp fully what he's trying to tell you. But it must have to do with his having to accept the loss of his original mode of creation, in which the songs seemed to come to him without his knowing what he was doing. Does he still have that same access to—I don't know how to put the question. He helps me out. **"No, not in the same way,"** he says. **"Not in the same way at all. But I can get there, by following certain forms and structures. It's not luck. Luck's in the early years. In the early years, I was trying to write and perform the sun and the moon. At a certain point, you just realize that nobody can do that."** In the myth that he's structured to explain himself to himself—and he really is the one in possession of that truth—"*Time Out of Mind*" must mark the point of that acceptance. "*Chronicles,*" the "dream" in which he found himself constrained to tell the literal truth, is his attempt, at long last, to explain himself to us.

'ON THE RUN'

By the late '60s, Dylan had been anointed—by whom and as what, he didn't know. An exclusive excerpt on the infuriating, dizzying wind tunnel of fame.

From "*Chronicles, Volume One*" by Bob Dylan. To be published by Simon & Schuster, Inc. © 2004 by Bob Dylan.

I HAD BEEN IN A MOTORCYCLE accident and I'd been hurt, but I recovered. Truth was that I wanted to get out of the rat race. Having children changed my life and segregated me from just about everybody and everything that was going on. Outside of my family, nothing held any real interest for me and I was seeing everything through different glasses. Even the horrifying news items of the day, the gunning down of the Kennedys, King, Malcolm X... I didn't see them as leaders being shot down, but rather as fathers whose families had been left

wounded. Being born and raised in America, the country of freedom and independence, I had always cherished the values and ideals of equality and liberty. I was determined to raise my children with those ideals.

A few years earlier Ronnie Gilbert, one of The Weavers, had introduced me at one of the Newport Folk Festivals saying, "And here he is... take him, you know him, he's yours." I had failed to sense the ominous forebodings in the introduction. Elvis had never even been introduced like that. "Take him, he's yours!" What a crazy thing to say! Screw that. As far as I knew, I didn't belong to anybody then or now. I had a wife and children whom I loved more than anything else in the world. I was trying to provide for them, keep out of trouble, but the big bugs in the press kept promoting me as the mouthpiece, spokesman, or even conscience of a generation. That was funny. All I'd ever done was sing songs that were dead straight and expressed powerful new realities. I had very little in common with and knew even less about a generation that I was supposed to be the voice of. I'd left my hometown only ten years earlier, wasn't vociferating the opinions of anybody. My destiny lay down the road with whatever life invited, had nothing to do with representing any kind of civilization. Being true to yourself, that was the thing. I was more a cowpuncher than a Pied Piper.

People think that fame and riches translate into power, that it brings glory and honor and happiness. Maybe it does, but sometimes it doesn't. I found myself stuck in Woodstock, vulnerable and with a family to protect. If you looked in the press, though, you saw me being portrayed as anything but that. It was surprising how thick the smoke had become. It seems like the world has always needed a scapegoat—someone to lead the charge against the Roman Empire. But America wasn't the Roman Empire and someone else would have to step up and volunteer. I really was never any more than what I was—a folk musician who gazed into the gray mist with tear-blinded eyes and made up songs that floated in a luminous haze. Now it had blown up in my face and was hanging over me. I wasn't a preacher performing miracles. It would have driven anybody mad.

Early on, Woodstock had been very hospitable to us. I had actually discovered the place long before moving there. Once, at night, driving down from Syracuse after playing a show, I told my manager about the town. We were going to be driving right by it. He said he was looking for a place to buy a country house. We drove through the town, he spied a house he liked and bought it there and then. I had bought one later on, and it was in this same house that intruders started to break in day and night. Tensions mounted almost immediately and peace was hard to come by. At one time the place had been a quiet refuge, but now, no more. Roadmaps to our homestead must have been posted in all fifty states for gangs of dropouts and druggies. Moochers showed up from as far away as California on pilgrimages. Goons were breaking into our place all hours of the night. At first, it was merely the nomadic homeless making illegal entry—seemed harmless enough, but then rogue radicals looking for the Prince of Protest began to arrive—unaccountable-looking characters, gargoyle-looking gals, scarecrows, stragglers looking to party, raid the pantry. Peter LaFarge, a folksinger friend of mine, had given me a couple of Colt single-shot repeater pistols, and I also had a clip-fed Winchester blasting rifle around, but it was awful to think about what could be done with those things. The authorities, the chief of police (Woodstock had about three cops) had told me that if anyone was shot accidentally or even shot at as a warning, it would be me that would be going to the lockup. Not only that, but creeps thumping their boots across our roof could even take me to court if any of them fell off. This was so unsettling. I wanted to set fire to these people. These gate-crashers, spooks, trespassers, demagogues were all disrupting my home life and the fact that I was not to piss them off or they could press charges really didn't appeal to me. Each day and night was fraught with difficulties. Everything was wrong, the world was absurd. It was backing me into a corner. Even persons near and dear offered no relief.

Once in the midsummer madness I was riding in a car with Robbie Robertson, the guitar player in what later was to be called The Band. I felt like I might as well have been living in another part of the solar system. He says to me, "Where do you think you're gonna take it?"

I said, "Take what?"

"You know, the whole music scene." The whole music scene! The car window was rolled down about an inch. I rolled it clown the rest of the way, felt a gust of wind blow into my face and waited for what he said to die away—it was like dealing with a conspiracy. No place was far enough away. I don't know what everybody else was fantasizing about but what I was fantasizing about was a nine-to-five existence, a house on a tree-lined block with a white picket fence, pink roses in the backyard. That would have been nice. That was my deepest dream. After a while you learn that privacy is something you can sell, but you can't buy it back. Woodstock had turned into a nightmare, a place of chaos. Now it was time to scramble out of there in search of some new silver lining and that's what we did. We moved to New York City for a while in hopes to demolish my identity, but it wasn't any better there. It was even worse. Demonstrators found our house and paraded up and down in front of it chanting and shouting, demanding for me to come out and lead them somewhere—stop shirking my duties as the conscience of a generation. Once the street was blocked off and our house was picketed by firebrands with city permits, demonstrators roaring and snorting. The neighbors hated us. To them it must have seemed like I was something out of a carnival show—some exhibition in the Palace of Wonders. They would stare at me when they saw me, like they'd stare at a shrunken head or a giant jungle rat. I pretended that I didn't care.

Eventually, we tried moving West—tried a few different places, but in short time reporters would come sniffing around in hopes to gain some secret—maybe I'd confess some sin. Our address would be printed in the local press and then the same thing would start up. Even if these reporters had been allowed in the house, what would they find? A whole lotta stuff—stacking toys, push and pull toys, child-sized tables and chairs—big empty cardboard boxes—science kits, puzzles and toy drums... I wasn't going to let anybody in the house. As for house rules, we didn't have many. If the kids wanted to play basketball in the kitchen, they played basketball in the kitchen. If they got into the pots and pans, we put all the pots and pans out on the floor. My house was chaotic inside as well as out.

Joan Baez recorded a protest song about me that was getting big play, challenging me to get with it—come out and take charge, lead the masses—be an advocate, lead the crusade. The song called out to me from the radio like a public service announcement. The press never let up. Once in a while I would have to rise up and offer myself for an interview so they wouldn't beat down the door. Usually the questions would start out with something like, "Can we talk further upon things that are happening?" "Sure, like what?" Reporters would shoot questions at me and I would tell them repeatedly that I was not a spokesman for anything or anybody and that I was only a musician. They'd look into my eyes as if to find some evidence of bourbon and handfuls of amphetamines. I had no idea what they were thinking. Later an article would hit the streets with the headline "Spokesman Denies That He's a Spokesman." I felt like a piece of meat that someone had thrown to the dogs. The *New York Times* printed quacky interpretations of my songs. *Esquire* magazine put a four-faced monster on their cover, my face along with Malcolm X's, Kennedy's and Castro's. What the hell was that supposed to mean? It was like I was on the edge of the earth. If anybody had any sound guidance or advice to offer, it wasn't forthcoming. My wife, when she married me, had no idea of what she was getting into. Me neither, actually, and now we were in a no win situation.

For sure my lyrics had struck nerves that had never been struck before, but if my songs were just about the words, then what was Duane Eddy, the great rock-and-roll guitarist, doing recording an album full of instrumental melodies of my songs? Musicians have always known that my songs were about more than just words, but most people are not musicians. What I had to do was recondition my mind and stop putting the blame on external forces. I had to

educate myself, get rid of some baggage. The solitude of time was what I didn't have. Whatever the counterculture was, I'd seen enough of it. I was sick of the way my lyrics had been extrapolated, their meanings subverted into polemics and that I had been anointed as the Big Bubba of Rebellion, High Priest of Protest, the Czar of Dissent, the Duke of Disobedience, Leader of the Freeloaders, Kaiser of Apostasy, Archbishop of Anarchy, the Big Cheese. What the hell are we talking about? Horrible tides any way you want to look at it. All code words for *Outlaw*.

It was tough moving around—like the Merle Haggard song, "...I'm on the run, the highway is my home." I don't know if Haggard ever had to get his family out with him, but I know I did. It's a little different when you have to do that. The landscape burned behind us. The press was in no hurry to retract their judgment and I couldn't just lie there, had to take the bull by the horns myself and remodel the image of me, change the perception of it anyway. There aren't any rules to cover an emergency of this kind. This was a new thing for me and I wasn't used to thinking this way. I'd have to send out deviating signals, crank up the wrecking train—create some different impressions.

At first I was only able to do little things, local things. Tactics, really. Unexpected things like pouring a bottle of whiskey over my head and walking into a department store and act pie-eyed, knowing that everyone would be talking amongst themselves when I left. I was hoping that the news would spread. What mattered to me most was getting breathing room for my family. The whole spectral world could go to hell. My outer image would have to be something a bit more confusing, a bit more humdrum. It's hard to live like this. It takes all your effort. The first thing that has to go is any form of artistic self-expression that's dear to you. Art is unimportant next to life, and you have no choice. I had no hunger for it anymore, anyway. Creativity has much to do with experience, observation and imagination, and if any one of those key elements is missing, it doesn't work. It was impossible now for me to observe anything without being observed. Even when I walked to the corner store someone would spot me and sneak away to find a phone. In Woodstock I'd be out in the yard and a car would come rolling up, some guy would jump out of the passenger side, point in my direction and then walk away—and a bunch of sightseers would then come down the hill. Citizens would see me coming down the street and cross it, didn't want to get caught—guilt by association. Sometimes in a restaurant (my name was widely known but my face not so at the time) one of the eaters who recognized me would go up to the cashier, point in my direction and whisper, "That's him over there." The cashier would tell someone and the news would go from table to table. It was like lightning struck the place. Necks would stretch. Folks chewing their food would spit it out, look at one another and say, "That him?" "You mean that guy that was sitting over there at that table with the bunch of kids?" It was like moving a mountain. My house was being battered, ravens constantly croaking ill omens at our door. What kind of alchemy, I wondered, could create a perfume that would make reaction to a person lukewarm, indifferent and apathetic? I wanted to get some. I had never intended to be on the road of heavy consequences and I didn't like it. I wasn't the toastmaster of any generation, and that notion needed to be pulled up by its roots. Liberty for myself and my loved ones had to be secured. I had no time to kill and I didn't like what was being thrown at me. This main meal of garbage had to be mixed up with some butter and mushrooms and I'd have to go great lengths to do it. You gotta start somewhere.

I went to Jerusalem, got myself photographed at the Western Wall wearing a skullcap. The image was transmitted worldwide instantly and quickly all the great rags changed me overnight into a Zionist. This helped a little. Coming back I quickly recorded what appeared to be a country-western record and made sure it sounded pretty bridled and housebroken. The music press didn't know what to make of it. I used a different voice, too. People scratched their heads. I started a rumor with my record company that I would be quitting music and going to college, the Rhode Island School of Design—which eventually leaked out to the columnists. "He won't last a month," some people said. Journalists began asking in print, "Whatever happened to the old him?" They could go to hell, too. Stories were printed

about me trying to find myself, that I was on some eternal search, that I was suffering some kind of internal torment. It all sounded good to me. 1 released one album (a double one) where I just threw everything I could think of at the wall and whatever stuck, released it, and then went back and scooped up everything that didn't stick and released that, too. I missed out on Woodstock—just wasn't there. Altamont—sympathy for the devil—missed that, too. Eventually I would even record an entire album based on Chekhov short stories—critics thought it was autobiographical—that was fine. I played a part in a movie, wore cowboy duds and galloped down the road. Not much required there. I guess I was naïve.

The novelist Herman Melville's work went largely unnoticed after *Moby-Dick*. Critics thought that he crossed the literary line and recommended burning *Moby-Dick*. By the time of his death he was largely forgotten.

I had assumed that when critics dismissed my work, the same thing would happen to me, that the public would forget about me. How mad is that? Eventually, I would have to face the music—go back to performing—the long-awaited ballyhooed reunion tour—gypsy tours—changing ideologies like tires, like shoes, like guitar strings. What's the difference? As long as my own form of certainty stayed intact, I owed nobody nothing. I wasn't going to go deeper into the darkness for anybody. I was already living in the darkness. My family was my light and I was going to protect that light at all cost. That was where my dedication was, first, last and everything in-between. What did I owe the rest of the world? Nothing. Not a damn thing. The press? I figured you lie to it. For the public eye, I went into the bucolic and mundane as far as possible. In my real life I got to do the things that I loved the best and that was all that mattered—the Little League games, birthday parties, taking my kids to school, camping trips, boating, rafting, canoeing, fishing... I was living on record royalties. In reality I was imperceptible, my image, that is. Sometime in the past I had written and performed songs that were most original and most influential, and I didn't know if I ever would again and I didn't care.

The actor Tony Curtis once told me that fame is an occupation in itself, that it is a separate thing. And Tony couldn't be more right. The old image slowly faded and in time I found myself no longer under the canopy of some malignant influence. Eventually different anachronisms were thrust upon me—anachronisms of lesser dilemma—though they might seem bigger. Legend, Icon, Enigma (Buddha in European Clothes was my favorite)—stuff like that, but that was all right. These tides were placid and harmless, threadbare, easy to get around with them. Prophet, Messiah, Savior—those are tough ones.

26 October 2004
Austin Scaggs interview for *Rolling Stone*, Manhattan, Kansas

Source: *Rolling Stone* online edition, Q&A: Bob Dylan, posted 17 November 2004, 12:00am

Q&A: Bob Dylan

He's not sorry about the Victoria's Secret ad and not sure you should call Chronicles a book
AUSTIN SCAGGS

Bob Dylan has proved that his prose can be as elegant as his poetry. In his new memoir, *Chronicles: Volume One*, Dylan takes us on a circular ride through the most intense periods of his professional life, from Greenwich Village in 1961 to his retreat to Woodstock in 1968 and his regeneration in the late Eighties. It's less an autobiography than a historical document – a philosophical and personal analysis of life in America – and it will make your head spin. Ladies and gentlemen, Columbia recording artist Bob Dylan, checking in from a tour stop in Manhattan, Kansas.

AS: In *Chronicles* you write about the guitar technique that Lonnie Johnson taught you. Only a serious musician could comprehend the language you use. Why'd you choose to go into such great detail?

BD: I think it might be helpful for people to understand that my style has got a structure to it. Maybe I wrote that for people who play. Some people might pick it up. Why? Do you find it irrelevant in some way?

AS: On the contrary.

BD: I can't say whether a bus driver would find it interesting. To me it was important.

AS: You also describe watching *La Dolce Vita* "intently, thinking that I might not see it again." Do you have a photographic memory?

BD: I leave my mind open. I don't fill it up with a lot of things. I'm very careful as to what I get distracted by. With the book, what I try and do is put a feeling across. It's not the kind of book where it's a short life and a merry one. It's more abstract, drawn out over long periods of time. I worked the book, if you want to call it that, in patterns. I portray life as a game of chance. It works on a variety of levels, like some of the best songs do.

AS: You write about the night Woody Guthrie sent you to his house in Coney Island to get a box of his lyrics. What would have happened if you'd found them?

BD: I don't know if I would have been capable of doing much with them at all, really, though I suppose I would have. I don't think I would have made a record of that stuff, like the record that eventually came out [Billy Bragg and Wilco's *Mermaid Avenue Vols. I and II*]**. Who'd really heard of me?**

AS: You downplay a chunk of your career in *Chronicles*. Am I crazy to love *Street Legal*, *Slow Train Coming* and *Infidels*?

BD: Not at all. I can play those songs, but I probably can't listen to those records. I'll hear too many faults. I was just being swept along with the current when I was making those records. I don't think my talent was under control. But there's probably good stuff on all of them. Shelley said the point was to make unpremeditated art. I don't think those records fall into that category.

AS: Lyrically, does it get any better than "*It's Alright, Ma*"?

BD: It's hard to live up to that kind of thing. You can't try to top it – that's not the point. Lyrically you can't top it, no. I still can play that song, and I know what it can do. That song was written with a hunger that can break down stone walls. That was the motivation.

AS: Have you ever hung with Little Richard?

BD: Yeah!

AS: What was that like? Did you tell him that in your high school yearbook you wrote your ambition was to be in his band?

BD: He's a fantastic person. Very exciting guy to be around, as you can imagine. I don't think I told him about the yearbook – I don't think I needed to. He knows I've been a fan of his from way back.

AS: In the book you don't talk too much about playing harp. What harmonica performances of your own are you most proud of?

BD: A lot of them, really. I don't know if proud is the word... I play the harmonica like I play the piano. I don't really need to listen to what I'm playing. Of course, I can tell if I'm playing it wrong, when it's not going to appeal to anybody. It might on a technological level, but it won't on a gut level. If I put it into the beat, right on the one or the three, that's really basically all I have to do to get the point across. It will form a melodic structure on its own. Someone can always play it better, but you've heard a lot of great musicians where it sounds great at the time, but you forget about it two minutes later. I stay away from that showoff thing.

AS: This is how I see it: You fly to Italy, hang out with beautiful women, make a little scratch and next thing you're in a Victoria's Secret commercial.

BD: Yeah. Was I not supposed to do that?

AS: I enjoyed it.

BD: I wish I would have seen it. Maybe I'd have something to say about it. I don't see that kind of stuff. That's all for other people to see and make up what they will.

AS: Why do you leave your Oscar on your guitar amp?

BD: I think it's welded to it now. The guys who work with me backstage are so thrilled about seeing it that they keep putting it up there.

AS: What's the last song you'd like to hear before you die?

BD: How 'bout "*Rock of Ages*"?

AS: I heard you've written songs for a new album.

BD: I have a bunch of them. I do.

AS: When will you crank 'em out?

BD: Maybe in the beginning of the year. I'm not sure where and when.

AS: Can you tell me about them?

BD: No, I couldn't explain them to you. After you listen to them, call me back. It's difficult to paraphrase them or tell you what kind of style they're in. You won't be surprised.

AS: Why not?

BD: The musical structure you're used to hearing – it might be rearranged a bit. The songs themselves will speak to you.

AS: I saw you play at the Newport Folk Festival a couple of years ago. What was up with the wig and fake beard?

BD: Is that me who you saw up there?

19 November 2004
Ed Bradley interview for CBS "60 Minutes" special, Northampton, MA

Source: circulating tape and this link. Originally broadcast on December 5th, 2004

When we sat down with him, it was the first television interview Bob Dylan had done in nearly twenty years. And as you'll see, he had a lot to say about his life and about the songs that made him so famous.

BD: I don't know how I got to write those songs.
EB: What do you mean you don't know how?
BD: All those early songs were almost magically written. Ah… "Darkness at the break of noon, shadows even the silver spoon, a handmade blade, the child's balloon…" Well, try to sit down and write something like that.

EB: For as long as I have been here with "60 Minutes" I've wanted to interview Bob Dylan. Over his 43-year career, there is no musician alive who has been more influential. His distinctive twang and poetic lyrics have produced some of the most memorable songs ever written. In the '60s, his songs of protest and turmoil spoke to an entire generation.
While his life has been the subject of endless interpretation, he has been largely silent. Now at age 63, he's written a memoir called "Chronicles, Volume One."
I finally got to sit down with him in his first television interview in nearly 20 years. What you will see is pure Dylan – mysterious, allusive, fascinating – just like his music.

EB: I'd read somewhere that you wrote "Blowin' in the Wind" in ten minutes, is that right?
BD: Probably.
EB: Just like that?
BD: Yeah.
EB: Where did it come from?
BD: It just came. It came from… was like a… right out of that wellspring of creativity, I would think, you know.

That wellspring of creativity has sustained Bob Dylan for more than four decades, and produced 500 songs and more than 40 albums.

EB: Do you ever look back at the music that you've written and look back at it and say "Wow! That surprise me!"?
BD: I used to. I don't do that anymore. I don't know how I got to write those songs.
EB: What do you mean you don't know how?
BD: All those early songs were almost magically written. Ah… "Darkness at the break of noon, shadows even the silver spoon, a handmade blade, the child's balloon…"

This Dylan classic, "It's Alright, Ma," was written in 1964.

BD: Well, try to sit down and write something like that. There's a magic to that, and it's not Siegfried and Roy kind of magic, you know? It's a different kind of a penetrating magic. And, you know, I did it. I did it at one time.
EB: Do you think you can do it again today?
BD: Uh-uh.

EB: Does that disappoint you, or…?
BD: Well, you can't do something forever. I did it once, and I can do other things now. But, I can't do that.

Dylan has been writing music since he was a teenager in the remote town of Hibbing, Minnesota. The eldest of two sons of Abraham and Beatty Zimmerman.

EB: Did you have a good life, a good… happy childhood growing up?
BD: I really didn't consider myself happy or unhappy. I always knew that there was something out there that I needed to get to. And it wasn't where I was at that particular moment.
EB: It wasn't in Minnesota.
BD: No.

It was in New York City. As he writes in his book, he came alive when at age 19, he moved to Greenwich Village which at the time was the frenetic center of the '60s counterculture. Within months, he had signed a recording contract with Columbia Records.

EB: You refer to New York as the capital of the world. But when you told your father that, he thought that it was a joke. Did your parents approve of you being a singer-songwriter? Going to New York?
BD: No. They wouldn't have wanted that for me. But my parents never went anywhere. My father probably thought the capital of the world was wherever he was at the time. It couldn't possibly be anyplace else. Where he and his wife were in their own home, that, for them, was the capital of the world.
EB: What made you different? What pushed you out of there?
BD: Well, I listened to the radio a lot. I hung out in the record stores. And I slam-banged around on the guitar and played the piano and learned songs from a world which didn't exist around me.

He says that he knew even then that he was destined to become a music legend. **"I was heading for the fantastic lights,"** *he writes.* **"Destiny was looking right at me and nobody else."**

EB: You use the word "destiny" over and over throughout the book. What does it mean to you?
BD: It's a feeling you have that you know something about yourself that nobody else does – the picture you have in your mind of what you're about will come true. It's kind of a thing you kind of have to keep to your own self, because it's a fragile feeling. And if you put it out there, somebody will kill it. So, it's best to keep that all inside.

When we ask him why he changed his name, he said, **"that was destiny, too."**

EB: So you didn't see yourself as Robert Zimmerman.
BD: For some reason, you know, I never did.
EB: Even before you started performing?
BD: Nah, even then. Some people get born, you know, with the wrong names, wrong parents. I mean, that happens.
EB: Tell me how you decided on Bob Dylan?
BD: You call yourself what you want to call yourself. This is the land of the free.

Bob Dylan created a world inspired by old folk music, with piercing and poetic lyrics, as in songs like "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall." Songs that reflected the tension and unrest of the civil rights and anti-war movements of the '60s.

It was an explosive mixture that turned Dylan, by age 25, into a cultural and political icon – playing to sold out concert halls around the world, and followed by people wherever he went. He was called the voice of his generation – and was actually referred to as a prophet, a messiah. Yet he saw himself simply as a musician:

BD: You feel like an impostor when you're... when someone thinks you're something and you're not.
EB: What was the image that people had of you? And what was the reality?
BD: The image of me was certainly not a songwriter or a singer. It was more like some kind of a threat to society in some kind of way.
EB: What was the toughest part for you personally?
BD: It was like being in an Edgar Allan Poe story. And you're just not that person everybody thinks you are, though they call you that all the time. 'You're the prophet.' 'You're the savior.' I never wanted to be a prophet or savior. Elvis maybe. I could easily see myself becoming him. But prophet? No.
EB: I know that, and I accept, you don't see yourself as the voice of that generation, but some of your songs did stop people cold. And they saw them as anthems, and they saw them as protest songs. It was important it their life, it sparked the movement. You may not have seen it that way, but that's the way it was for them. How do you reconcile those two things?
BD: My stuff were songs, you know? They weren't sermons. If you examine the songs, I don't believe you're gonna find anything in there that says that I'm a spokesman for anybody or anything really.
EB: But they saw it.
BD: Yeah, but they must not have heard the songs.
EB: It's ironic, you know, that the way that people viewed you was just the polar opposite of the way you viewed yourself.
BD: Ain't that something?

Dylan did almost anything to shatter the lofty image many people had of him. He writes that he intentionally made bad records; once poured whiskey over his head in public, and as a stunt, he went to Israel and made a point of having his picture taken at the Wailing Wall wearing a skullcap.

EB: When you went to Israel, you wrote that **"the newspapers changed me overnight into a Zionist and this helped a lot."** How did it help?
BD: Look, if the common perception of me out there in the public was that I was either a drunk, or I was a sicko, or a Zionist, or a Buddhist, or a Catholic, or a Mormon – all of this was better than "Archbishop of Anarchy".
EB: …and the Spokesman for the Generation…
BD: Yeah.
EB: …opposed everything.
BD: Mm-hmm.

He was especially opposed to the media, which he says was always trying to pin him down.

EB: Let me talk a little bit about your relationship with the media. You wrote, **"The press, I figured, you lied to it."** Why?
BD: I realized at the time that the press, the media, they're not the judge – God's the judge. The only person you have to think about lying twice to is either yourself or to God. The press isn't either of them. And I just figured they're irrelevant.

Bob Dylan tried to run away from all of that. In the mid '60s, he retreated with his wife and three young children to Woodstock, N.Y. But even there, he couldn't escape the legions of fans who descended on his home, begging for an audience with the legend himself.

EB: So the people would actually come to the house?
BD: Mm-hmm.
EB: And do what?
BD: They wanted discuss things with me, politics and philosophy and organic farming and things, you know.
EB: What did you know about organic farming?
BD: Nothing. Not a thing.
EB: What did you mean when you wrote that **"the funny thing about fame is that nobody believes it's you"**?
BD: People, they'll say, 'Are you who I think you are?' And you'll say, 'I don't know.' Then, they'll say, 'You're him.' And you'll say, 'OK,' you know, that 'yes' and then, the next thing they'll say, 'Well, no,' you know? Like 'Are you really him?' 'You're not him.' And, you know, that can go on and on.
EB: Do you go out to restaurants now?
BD: I don't like to eat in restaurants.
EB: Because people come up and say, 'Are you him?'
BD: That's always is gonna happen, yeah.
EB: Do you ever get used to it?
BD: No.

At his peak, fame was taking its toll on Bob Dylan. He was heading toward a divorce from his wife, Sara. And in concerts, he wore white makeup to mask himself. But his songs revealed the pain.

EB: You said, **"My wife when she married me had no idea of what she was getting into."**
BD: Well, she was with me back then, through thick and thin, you know? And it just wasn't the kind of life that she had ever envisioned for herself, any more the than the kind of life that I was living, that I had envisioned for mine.

By the mid-1980s, Dylan felt he was burned out and over the hill.

EB: And you also wrote that: **"I'm a '60s troubadour, a folk-rock relic. A wordsmith from bygone days. I'm in the bottomless pit of cultural oblivion."** Those were pretty harsh words.
BD: Oh, I'd seen all these titles written about me. You know.
EB: And you started to believe it?
BD: Well, I believed it, anyway, you know. I wasn't getting any thrill out of performing. I sorted it might be time to close it up, you know.
EB: You really thought about quitting, folding up the tent?
BD: I had thought I'd just put it away for a while. But then I started thinking, 'That's enough,' you know?

But within a few years, Dylan told us he'd recaptured his creative spark, and he went back on the road. Performing more than 100 concerts a year. In 1998 he won three Grammy awards. At age 63, Bob Dylan remains a voice as unique and powerful as any there has ever been in American music. His fellow musicians paid tribute to him when he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, joining him in a rousing rendition of his most famous song, "Like a Rolling Stone."

EB: As you probably know, *Rolling Stone* magazine just named your song, "Like A Rolling Stone," the number one song of all time. 12 your other songs are on their list of the Top 500. That must be good to have as part of your legacy.

BD: Oh, maybe this week. But you know, the list, they change names, and you know, quite frequently, really. I don't really pay much attention to that.

EB: But it's a pat on the back?

BD: This week it is. But who's to say how long that's gonna last?

EB: Well, it's lasted a long time for you. I mean you're still out here doing these songs, you know. You're still on tour.

BD: I do, but I don't take it for granted.

EB: Why do you still do it? Why are you still out here?

BD: Well, it goes back to that destiny thing. I made a bargain with it, you know, long time ago. And I'm holding up my end…

EB: What was your bargain?

BD: …to get where I am now.

EB: Should I ask who you made that bargain with?

BD: [laughs] **With the chief commander.**

EB: On this earth?

BD: [laughs] **In this earth and in the world we can't see.**

Bob Dylan has been nominated this year for the Nobel Prize in literature for his songwriting. His new book has been a bestseller for the past seven weeks. It was published by Simon & Schuster, which is owned by Viacom, the parent company of CBS. Dylan is planning to write two more volumes of his memoirs.

2005
Jeff Rosen interviews for *No Direction Home*

Source: Official DVD release

Excerpts of 10 hour's worth of interviews that Jeff Rosen bestowed on Martin Scorsese who selected them for the film.

I had ambitions to set out and find like an odyssey of going home somewhere. I set out to find this home that I'd left a while back and I couldn't remember exactly where it was, but I was on my way there. And encountering what I encountered on the way, was how I envisioned it all. I didn't really have any ambition at all. I was born very far from where I'm supposed to be and so I'm on my way home, you know.

Time... You can do a lot of things that seem to make time stand still but of course, you know, no one can do that.

Maybe when I was about 10, I started playing the guitar. I found a guitar in the house that my father bought, actually. I found something else in there. This kind of mystical overtones. There was a great big mahogany radio. It had a 78 turntable when you opened up the top. And I opened it up one day and there was a record on, a country record, this song called, 'Drifting Too Far From (The) **Shore.' The sound of the record made me feel like I was somebody else and that, you know, I was maybe not even born to the right parents, or something.**

It looked like any other town out of the '40s or '50s. Just some rural town. It was on the way to nowhere. And you probably couldn't find it on a map.

Maybe three blocks one way, and maybe three blocks the other way and that was like a main street where all the department stores were the drugstores, the… That's about it, you know.

What happens to a town after the livelihood is gone? ll right, it just sort of decays and blows away, doesn't it? That's the way it goes. Most of the land was either farmland or just completely scavenged by the mining companies. Very hot in the summertime; in the winter, it was just rightly cold, you know. All winter, it was just, I mean… We didn't have the clothes they have now, so I mean, you just wore two or three shirts at a time. Slept in your clothes.

The pit was on the outer limits of the town. That's where everybody worked. You couldn't be a rebel. It was so cold that you couldn't be bad. The weather equalizes everything very quickly. And nobody was gonna really pull a stickup. There really wasn't any philosophy, any idiom... any ideology to really go against.

My father and his brothers, they had an electrical store. 'Bout the first job I ever had was sweeping up the store and I was supposed to learn the discipline of hard work or something, you know, and the merits of employment.

Circuses came through. There were tent shows at the carny midways. And they had barkers.

It was just more rural back then. That's what people did. You could see guys in blackface. George Washington in blackface or Napoleon wearing blackface. Like, weird Shakespearean things. Stuff that didn't really make any sense at the time. And people had other jobs in the carny team. I saw somebody putting makeup on getting back from running the Ferris wheel once. And I thought that was pretty interesting. Guy's got, you know... He does two things,

you know, or something like that.

We'd have to listen late at night for other stations to come in from other parts of the country, places that were far away. Fifty-thousand watt stations coming out through the atmosphere.

Johnnie Ray. He had some kind of strange incantation in his voice like he'd been voodooed and he cried, kind of, when he sang.

It was the sound that got to me. It wasn't who it was, or... It was the sound of it.

I began listening to the radio, I began to get bored being there. I thought about going to military school, but the military school that I envisioned myself going to I couldn't get in which was West Point. You know, I could always envision myself dying in some heroic battle somewhere. So I mean, maybe that era has gone.

First time I heard rock 'n' roll on the radio I felt it was pretty similar to the country music which I'd been listening to. I formed a couple of groups, growing up, and we rehearsed and played where we could play. There wasn't much opportunity to really break out of that area.

Nobody liked country music, or rock 'n' roll, or rhythm and blues. That kind of music wasn't what was happening up there. The music that was popular was 'How Much is that Doggie in the Window?' That wasn't our reality. Our reality was bleak to begin with. Our reality was fear that at any moment this black cloud would explode, where everybody would be dead. They would show you in school, how to dive for cover under your desk. We grew up with all that, so it created a sense of paranoia that, I don't know, was probably unforeseen.

I really can't say if the girls took a liking to me or not from playing around town. The first girl that ever took a liking to me, her name was Gloria Story. Gloria Story, I mean, that was her real name. Second girlfriend was named Echo. Now, that's pretty strange. I've never met anybody named Echo. I serenaded her underneath the ladder that went up to her window. And both these girls, by the way, brought out the poet in me.

James Dean, Brando, 'The Wild One.' It didn't kill all the entire past. It's not like they just appeared and there's a new scene happening now. Time, you know, time kind of obliterated the past that was around when I was growing up. Just time and progress, really.

Got out of high school and left the very next day. I'd gone as far as I could in my particular environment. I was gonna try to join some other band.

There was only one guy that ever came out of there, and he was out of Fargo. And I'd actually gone there to play with him. He had a regional hit called 'Suzie Baby.' At that point, I was just playing triplets on the piano. I didn't have my own piano, so they weren't gonna buy a piano. But I did play some shows with them. Nothing much came of it.

I was a musical expeditionary. I had no past, really, to speak of, nothing to go back to, nobody to lean on. I came down to Minneapolis. I didn't go to classes. I was enrolled but I didn't go to classes. I just didn't feel like it. We were singing and playing all night. Sleeping most of, you know, the morning. I didn't really have any time for studying.

I fell into that atmosphere of everything Kerouac was saying about the world being completely mad. And the only people for him that were interesting were the mad people, the mad ones, the ones who were, you know, mad to live and mad to talk, mad to be saved,

desirous of everything at the same time the ones who never yawn, all those mad ones. And I felt like I fit right into that bunch.

I had heard folk music before leaving the Iron Range. I'd heard John Jacob Niles somewhere, strangely enough. I don't know, folk music was delivering me something, you know which was the way I always felt about life, you know, and people and, you know, institutions, and ideology and it was just, you know, uncovering it all.

[on Odetta:] **She played that upstroke-downstroke kind of rhythm where you don't need the drum. It's kind of like a Tex-Mex rhythm. I heard that rhythm and I thought, well, I could use that rhythm for all kinds of things.**

I don't even remember, you know, buying any records. If went into the booth. I had a very agile mind. I could learn a song by maybe hearing it once or twice.

I traded my electric equipment for an acoustic guitar. Started playing almost immediately.

Why it became that particular name, I really can't say.

The name just popped into my head one day. But it didn't really happen any of the ways that I've read about it. I mean, I just don't feel like I had had a past and, you know, I couldn't relate to anything other than what I was doing at the present time and I don't, you know, didn't matter to me what I said, you know. It still doesn't, really.

Right then and there I had no goal except learning all the songs I could.

I'd forgotten all about the Iron Range, where I grew up. I'd forgotten about it all. It didn't even enter my mind.

Woody Guthrie, he had a particular sound. And besides that, he said something to go along with his sound. That was highly unusual, to my ears.

He was a radical, his songs had a radical slant. I thought, "ooh," you know, like... "That's what I want to sing. I want to sing that."

I couldn't believe that I'd never heard of this man. You could listen to his songs, and actually learn how to live. One guy said, "You're singing a Woody Guthrie song." He gave me a book that he wrote, called Bound for Glory, and I read it. I identified with that Bound for Glory book more than I even did with On the Road.

These songs sounded archaic to most people. I don't know why they didn't sound archaic to me. They sounded like these songs were happening at the moment, to me.

I was just learning songs and playing them and trying to find out who Woody Guthrie was. Woody's records were almost impossible to find. They didn't have any of his records in the record stores. Paul was a folk music scholar. He didn't play at all. He had a whole lot of records which probably couldn't be found anywhere else in the Midwest except at Paul's house, and he lived there with somebody else. You know, I was listening to records at his house once. I knew they'd be away for the weekend so I went over there and helped myself to a bunch of old records.

Those records were extremely hard to find. They were like hen's teeth. If you came across them, somebody like myself who was a musical expeditionary, you know, you just would have to immerse yourself in them.

I wanted to get to the East Coast to visit Woody Guthrie. When I first heard him, I didn't know if he was dead or alive, really. But then I discovered that he was definitely alive and he was in a hospital with some kind of ailment. So I thought it'd be a nice gesture to go visit him.

Hitchhiking back then was very acceptable. I had a suitcase and a guitar. And I don't know, maybe I had $ 10 in my pocket.

Joan Baez, she was staggering. Kind of like hit my world from a different angle. She was completely about folk music. She was an excellent, really excellent guitar player. When I saw her on television, I thought, you know, like. "That girl looks like she might need a singing partner." I'd say she was someplace in the back of my mind, you know.

Got out of the car on George Washington Bridge. Took the subway down to the Village. Went to the Café Wha? I looked out at the crowd. I most likely asked from the stage, "Does anybody know where a couple of people could stay tonight?"

I was ready for New York. I started playing immediately and I realized right away that I'd come to the right place, because there were many places to play. I played with Freddy Neil. He was a big star down there. I did that until about 8.00, he would give me what he could. The place was usually packed from 12.00 to 8.00 with tourists and lunch-hour secretaries. And then at 8:00 all the rest of the houses would open where you'd pass the basket and play.

There'd be a carny on the street bringing people down. "You know, you gotta come down here and see this." "There's so much weirdness you've never seen in your life." Just always, there'd be people coming and going.

Sawdust on the floor, tourist traps like, a poet, somebody singing a song with a parrot on a shoulder. Tiny Tim-type characters. No one who had any recordings out ever played them. You only played those if you had to.

You would have to make an impression on somebody. There were many, many singers who were good, but they couldn't focus their attention on anybody. They couldn't really get inside somebody's head. You gotta be able to pin somebody down.

So I found out where Woody Guthrie was and I took a bus out to Morristown. Basically, I think it was an insane asylum. I thought about it later, it was a sad thing, they put him in a mental home, because he just had the jitters. He asked for certain songs and I'd play them. I was young and impressionable and I think I must have been shocked in some kind of way to find him where I found him.

Brother John Sellers, he was the master of ceremonies at Gerde's Folk City. And there was one night called Hootenanny Night where anybody could play.

We just watched and we picked out the performers that were doing it for real and tried to pick up what the essence of what they were doing was.

Dave Van Ronk, he had that big gruff thing, but he had this very sweet, sensitive thing going on at the same time. He was a dichotomy of a performer. He could take the essence of the song and only go after that, not go after the frills.

Liam was profound. Besides all of his rebel songs and his acting career, he would have these incredible sayings. Like once he said to me after about 30 pints of Guinness he was saying, "Remember, Bob, no fear, no envy, no meanness." I said, "Right."

What I heard in the Clancy Brothers was rousing, rebel songs. Napoleonic in scope. And they were just these Musketeer-type characters. And then on the other level you had the romantic ballads that would just slay you right in your tracks, the sweetness of Tommy Makem and Liam. It was just like, take a sword, cut off your head, and then weep. That's sort of what they were about.

All the great performers that I'd seen who I wanted to be like were those kind of performers they all had one thing in common. It was in their eyes. Now, there was something in their eyes that would say: "I know something you don't know," and I wanted to be that kind of performer.

That's when I went to the crossroads and made a big deal. You know, like... One night and then went back to Minneapolis and it was like, "Hey, where's this guy been?" "You've been to the crossroads."

I wasn't seeing Woody Guthrie anymore. I was still singing a lot of his songs, but I'd replaced them with a lot of the other songs, all of a sudden. I kind of went through Woody Guthrie in a kind of way. But I didn't really want to go through Woody Guthrie. I didn't want to feel that it was something just negligible.

But I really cared, I really wanted to portray my gratitude in some kind of way. But I knew that I was not gonna be going back to Greystone anymore. I felt like I had to write that song. I did not consider myself a songwriter at all. But I needed to write that and I needed to sing it. So that's why I needed to write it. 'Cause it hadn't been written and that's what I needed to say, I needed to say that.

The owner of the place finally gave me a two-week run. He had me open for John Lee Hooker.

I didn't really feel like I was making a step forward anywhere. Things were taking its natural course.

I didn't start to have any ambition until I started working more and more. I wondered how people recorded. I wondered how you get to do that. There were always talent scouts in the clubs. No one had ever spoken to me directly about making any records so I just assumed they'd passed on me.

That was the sound of the day. People would want to hear a beautiful voice sing a melodic song.

The folksinging scene was either commercial folksinging for like a college kind of crowd: Harry Belafonte, Brothers Four... that commercial... They had records that were on the pop charts. And then there was the other side, which was intellectual. People would just sit there, you know, I think and playing in the environment that I was playing in was neither of those.

Yeah, he was kind of like a Damon Runyon character. Is that the word? One of these old Broadway guys, buzz-cut haircut. He was very special in a lot of ways. He was very enthusiastic. He had great love of music, and it just radiated out of him. When I met him, a

review had just come out of The New York Times of the set I'd played at Gerde's the previous night. Hammond had seen the article and asked me right then and there whether I wanted to record for Columbia Records. I thought it was almost unreal. I mean, no one would think that this kind of folk music would be recorded on Columbia Records.

They recorded the popular hits of the day of people usually with beautiful tones of voices and great arrangements. I don't know what they thought of my stuff up there.

I didn't tell anybody for a bit because I almost wasn't sure it was happening myself. I don't think I really told anybody until I actually went through with the sessions.

I have a habit I picked up someplace along the way. Whatever works for me, not to give that away so easily, you know.

When I did make that first record, I used songs which I just knew but I hadn't really performed them a lot. I wanted just to record stuff that was off the top of my head and see what would happen.

The House of the Rising Sun is on that record. I'd never done that song before, but I heard it every night 'cause Van Ronk would do it. So I thought he was really on to something with the song, so I just recorded it.

The mystery of being in a recording studio did something to me and those are the songs that came out.

When I got the disk, I played it and I was highly disturbed. I just wanted to cross this record out and make another record immediately. I thought I'd recorded the wrong songs and I'd already written a few of my own, that I thought maybe I should have stuck on there. I was way past that record. Or part of me was just saying that I didn't want to record that record anyway, that I just did it I didn't want to give away anything that was really dear to me or something.

I wrote them anywhere I was. You could write them on the subway or in a café or wherever. You could write them talking to somebody else and be scribbling down a song.

I didn't really know if that song was good or bad or... It felt right. But I didn't really know that it had any kind of anthemic quality or anything.

I wrote the songs to perform the songs. And I needed to sing, like, in that language. Which is a language that I hadn't heard before.

Everything was meshed up at that time. Everything was like just all in like a blender. Everyone was interested in whatever was going on. I stayed at a lot of people's houses which had poetry books and poetry volumes and I'd read what I found... I found Verlaine poems or Rimbaud, you know, "Drunken Boat," Illuminations.

The folk idiom is so widespread that you could take any part of it and rework a song. I never thought I was breaking through anything. I was just working with an existing form that was there. I was definitely not inventing anything that hadn't been tried before, some part of the picture, you know.

On my second album, all of a sudden people started to take notice that never noticed before. Grossman came into the picture around there. He was kind of like a Col. Tom Parker figure... all immaculately dressed, every time you see him. You could smell him coming.

Pete Seeger, very tall, like a towering figure. I didn't realize he was a communist. I really wasn't sure even what a communist was. If he was, it wouldn't have mattered to me anyway. I really didn't think about people in those terms.

To be on the side of people who are struggling for something doesn't necessarily mean you are being political.

Everyone was there who played folk music. Old and new. Sort of younger people, too.

I was the only singer there probably singing the songs that he'd written. And most likely, two years earlier to that, I wouldn't have been able to get into Newport.

I wrote a lot of songs in a quick amount of time. I could do that then, because the process was new to me. I felt like I'd discovered something no one else had ever discovered and I was in a sort of an arena artistically that no one else had ever been in before ever, although I might have been wrong about that.

In taking all the elements that I've ever known to make wide-sweeping statements which conveyed a feeling that was in the general essence of the spirit of the times. I think I managed to do that. I thought that I needed to press on and get as far into it as I could.

I was up close when King was giving that speech. To this day it still affects me in a profound way.

I looked out the podium, I looked out at the crowd and I remember thinking to myself. "Man, I've never seen such a large crowd."

You know, they were trying to build me up as a topical songwriter. I was never a topical songwriter to begin with. For whatever reason they were doing it was reasons not, really... That didn't really apply to me.

I was like an outsider, anyway. I'd come to town as an outsider, and still, in a lot of ways I was still more outside than I ever was, really. They were trying to make me an insider to some kind of trip they were on. I don't think so.

Johnny Cash was more like a religious figure to me. And there he was at Newport, you know, standing side by side. Meeting him was the high thrill of a lifetime. And, just the fact that he had sung one of my songs was just unthinkable.

An artist has got to be careful never really to arrive at a place where he thinks he's "at" somewhere. You always have to realize that you're constantly in the state of becoming, you know? And, as long as you can stay in that realm, you'll sort of be all right. I can't self-analyze my own work, and I wasn't going to cater to the crowd, because I knew certain people would like it, and certain people didn't like it. I had gotten in the door when no one was looking. I was in there now, and there was nothing anybody from then on, could ever do about it.

I felt it all over America. You know, wherever in America you went, you felt that things were happening in an Olympian type of way in which children were beyond their parents' command.

The ideal performances of the songs would then come on stages throughout the world. Very few could be found on any of my records. Every second, every... You know... Reaching the audience is what it's all about.

Words have their own meaning, or they have different meanings and words change their meaning. Words that meant something 10 years ago don't mean that now. They mean something else.

Subterranean Homesick Blues. I mean... I don't think I would have wanted to do it all by myself. I thought I'd get more power out of it, you know, with a small group in back of me. It was electric, but doesn't necessarily mean that it's modernized just because it's electric, you know? It was, you know, like a... Country music was electric, too.

They didn't light places, they didn't have to stop filming. If you ran, they ran. If you went in a room, they went into the room. And you know, at a certain point, you just became oblivious to that.

You know, it was probably a stupid thing to do not letting her play, but you can't be wise and in love at the same time, so... I hope she'd see the light sooner or later on that.

A lot of my songs, they were becoming hits for other people. There was, the Byrds had a big hit. Some group called the Turtles had some hit. Sonny and Cher had a hit with a song of mine. People were sort of writing a jingly-jangly kind of song... which seemed to have something to do with me, I, you know, like, "okay..." You know, 'I Got You, Babe', is some kind of take-off of me, something I wrote. Well, I don't know what it was a take-off on that I wrote, you know? I didn't really like that sound... or folk-rock, whatever that was, I didn't feel that had anything to do with me. It got me thinking about the Billboard charts and the songs which become popular, which I hadn't thought of that before.

Mike Bloomfield said he had heard my first record and said he wanted to show me how the blues were played and I didn't feel much competitive. I didn't feel much competitive with him, he could outplay anybody, even at that at that point, you know. But when it was time to bring in a guitar player on my record I couldn't think of anybody but him. I mean, he just was the best guitar player I ever heard.

Like a Rolling Stone definitely broke through somewhere. I didn't feel like radio had ever played a song like that before. I know I'd never heard a song like that before. So... And everything I'd done up to that point had led up to writing a song like that, just effortlessly.

I've never been that kind of performer that wants to be one of them, you know, like one of the crowd. I don't try to endear myself that way.

Now, do performers look for applause?

Yeah, yes and no. It really depends what kind of performer you are. Like the story of Billie Holiday, you know when she sang Strange Fruit for the first time, nobody applauded. You know, you could leave somebody kind of in a spellbound way and... I don't know. There's a lot of things going on when there's a performer on stage and there's an audience out there.

I was thinking that somebody was shouting, "Are you with us? Are you with us?" And, you know, I don't know what that, you know, like... What was that supposed to mean? I had no idea why they were booing. I don't think anybody was there having a negative response to

those songs, though. I mean, whatever it was about, it wasn't about anything that they were hearing.

I'd heard a rumor that Pete was going to cut the cable. And I heard it later, you know. And it was like, it didn't make sense to me. Like, Pete Seeger, like someone whose music I cherish, you know. Like someone who I highly respect is going to cut the cable. It was like, "Oh, God." It was like... It was like a dagger, you know, it was... Just the thought of it was, you know... made me go out and get drunk.

The booing didn't really, you know... I had a perspective on the booing, because you got to realize you can kill somebody with kindness, too.

Things had gotten out of hand. You know, it fell into the... You know, you ask me why I write surreal songs or whatever, I mean that type of activity is surreal. I had no answers to any of those questions any more than any other performer did, really. But, you know, that didn't stop the press or people or whoever they were from asking these questions. They, for some reason the press thought that performers had the answers to all these problems in the society and you know, like what can... What can you say to something like that? I mean, it's just kind of absurd.

At a certain point, people seemed to have a distorted, warped view of me for some reason, and those people were usually outside of the musical community. "The spokesman of the generation." "The conscience of a..." This, and that and the other. That I could not relate to. I just couldn't relate to it. As long as I could continue doing what it is that I loved to do I didn't care what kinds of labels were put on me or how I was perceived in the press, because I was playing to people every night.

The guys that were with me on that tour, which later became The Band, you know, we were all in it together. We were putting our heads in the lion's mouth and... I had to admire them for sticking it out with me. Just for doing it, in my book, they were, you know, gallant knights for even, you know, standing behind me.

These stages were created for people who stood on stage and recited Shakespearean plays. They weren't made for this kind of music we were playing. The sound was pretty archaic, really. The sound really hadn't been perfected. The sound quality hadn't been perfected many years after that.

And I'd just about had it, though. I'd had it with the with the whole scene. And I was... Whether I knew it or didn't know it, I was looking to just quit for a while.

What about the scene? What had you had it with? What about the scene were you sick of?

Well, you know, people like you. People like, you know, like, just, you know, like just being pressed and hammered and, you know, expected to answer questions. You know... What can I... You know, like... It was enough to make anybody sick, really.

March 2006
Bob Dylan's promotional spot for XM's *Theme Time Radio Hour*

source: official XM Radio website, available for online listening since mid-April 2006

The spot includes music by The Byrds, Jimi Hendrix, Duke Ellington, Stevie Wonder, Peter, Paul & Mary, Johnny Cash, The Rolling Stones, Coldplay and Bob Dylan (*Blowin' in the Wind*, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, *Rainy Day Women #12&35*, *All Along The Watchtower*, *I'll Be Your Baby Tonight* – with overdubbed harmonica solo/outro!), and spoken word by Paul McCartney, Coldplay, and more.

Bob Dylan spoken parts:

A, B – XM radio speakers

A: From early on his career, we knew that something very different and something very important was beginning to happen.

B: He saw was happening all around him and everybody else saw what was happening all around them, but he voiced that for the first time.

BD: *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* means something is gonna happen. (1965)

A: He didn't seek a lot of this attention he received, so what was Bob Dylan's reaction to all this attention he was getting?

BD: I ain't got no answers to any of those questions any more than any other performer did, really. For some reason the press thought that performers had all answers to all these problems in the society and it's kinda absurd.

BD: Join me, Bob Dylan, for Theme Time Radio Hour. The finest hour in American broadcasting. The hour of themes, dreams, and schemes. We make 'em rules and we break 'em rules. Join us and see how we do that. Right here, on XM.

August 2006
Jonathan Lethem interview for *Rolling Stone*

Source: *Internet*, Posted Aug 21, 2006 12:45 PM

THE GENIUS OF BOB DYLAN
The legend comes to grips with his iconic status; an intimate conversation prior to the release of the new ''Modern Times''
JONATHAN LETHEM

"I don't really have a herd of astrologers telling me what's going to happen. I just make one move after the other, this leads to that." Is the voice familiar? I'm sitting in a Santa Monica seaside hotel suite, ignoring a tray of sliced pineapple and sugar-dusty cookies, while Bob Dylan sits across from my tape recorder, giving his best to my questions. The man before me is fitful in his chair, not impatient, but keenly alive to the moment, and ready on a dime to make me laugh and to laugh himself. The expressions on Dylan's face, in person, seem to compress and encompass versions of his persona across time, a sixty-five-year-old with a nineteen-year-old cavorting somewhere inside. Above all, though, it is the tones of his speaking voice that seem to kaleidoscope through time: here the yelp of the folk pup or the sarcastic rimshot timing of the hounded hipster-idol, there the beguilement of the Seventies sex symbol, then again—and always—the gravel of the elder statesman, that antediluvian bluesman's voice the young aspirant so legendarily invoked at the very outset of his work and then ever so gradually aged into.

It's that voice, the voice of a rogue ageless in decrepitude, that grounds the paradox of the achievement of *Modern Times*, his thirty-first studio album. Are these our "modern times," or some ancient, silent-movie dream, a fugue in black-and-white? *Modern Times*, like *Love and Theft* and *Time Out of Mind* before it, seems to survey a broken world through the prism of a heart that's worn and worldly, yet decidedly unbroken itself. "I been sitting down studying the art of love/I think it will fit me like a glove," he states in "*Thunder on the Mountain*," the opening song, a rollicking blues you've heard a million times before and yet which magically seems to announce yet another "new" Dylan. "I feel like my soul is beginning to expand," the song declares. "Look into my heart and you will sort of understand."

What we do understand, if we're listening, is that we're three albums into a Dylan renaissance that's sounding more and more like a period to put beside any in his work. If, beginning with *Bringing It All Back Home*, Dylan garbed his amphetamine visions in the gloriously grungy clothes of the electric blues and early rock & roll, the musical glories of these three records are grounded in a knowledge of the blues built from the *inside out*—a knowledge that includes the fact that the early blues and its players were stranger than any purist would have you know, hardly restricting themselves to twelve-bar laments but featuring narrative recitations, spirituals, X-rated ditties, popular ballads and more. Dylan offers us nourishment from the root cellar of American cultural life. For an amnesiac society, that's arguably as mind-expanding an offering as anything in his Sixties work. And with each succeeding record, Dylan's convergence with his muses grows more effortlessly natural.

How does he summon such an eternal authority? **"I'd make this record no matter what was going on in the world,"** Dylan tells me. **"I wrote these songs in not a meditative state at all, but more like in a trancelike, hypnotic state. *This* is how I feel? Why do I *feel* like that? And who's the *me* that feels this way? I couldn't tell you that, either. But I know that those songs are just in my genes and I couldn't stop them comin' out."** This isn't to say *Modern Times*, or Dylan, seems oblivious to the present moment. The record is littered—or should I say baited?—with glinting references to world events like 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, though anyone seeking a moral, to paraphrase Mark Twain, should be shot. And, as if to startle the contemporary listener out of any delusion that Dylan's musical drift into pre-rock forms—blues,

ragtime, rockabilly—is the mark of a nostalgist, "Thunder on the Mountain" also name-checks a certain contemporary singer: "I was thinking 'bout Alicia Keys, I couldn't keep from crying/While she was born in Hell's Kitchen, I was livin' down the line." When I ask Dylan what Keys did "to get into your pantheon," he only chuckles at my precious question. **"I remember seeing her on the Grammys. I think I was on the show with her, I didn't meet her or anything. But I said to myself, 'There's *nothing* about that girl I don't like.' "**

Rather than analyzing lyrics, Dylan prefers to linger over the songs as artifacts of music and describes the process of their making. As in other instances, stretching back to 1974's *Planet Waves*, 1978's *Street Legal* and 2001's *Love and Theft*, the singer and performer known for his love-hate affair with the recording studio—**"I don't like to make records,"** he tells me simply. **"I do it reluctantly"**—has cut his new album with his touring band. And Dylan himself is the record's producer, credited under the nom-de-studio Jack Frost. **"I didn't feel like I wanted to be overproduced any more,"** he tells me. **"I felt like I've always produced my own records anyway, except I just had someone there in the way. I feel like nobody's gonna know how I should sound except me anyway, nobody knows what they want out of players except *me*, nobody can tell a player what he's doing wrong, nobody can find a player who *can* play but he's *not* playing, like I can. I can do that in my sleep."**

As ever, Dylan is circling, defining what he *is* first by what he *isn't*, by what he doesn't want, doesn't like, doesn't need, locating meaning by a process of elimination. This rhetorical strategy goes back at least as far as "It Ain't Me, Babe" and "All I Really Want to Do" ("I ain't looking to compete with you," etc.), and it still has plenty of real juice in it. When Dylan arrives at a positive assertion out of the wilderness of so much doubt, it takes on the force of a jubilant boast. **"This is the best band I've ever been in, I've ever had, *man for man*. When you play with guys a hundred times a year, you know what you can and can't do, what they're good at, whether you *want* 'em there. It takes a long time to find a band of individual players. Most bands are *gangs*. Whether it's a metal group or pop rock, whatever, you get that gang mentality. But for those of us who went back further, gangs were the *mob*. The gang was not what anybody aspired to. On this record I didn't have anybody to teach. I got guys now in my band, they can whip up anything, they surprise even *me*."** Dylan's cadences take on the quality of an impromptu recitation, replete with internal rhyme schemes, such that when I later transcribe this tape I'll find myself tempted to set the words on the page in the form of a lyric. **"I knew this time it wouldn't be *futile* writing something I really *love* and thought dearly *of*, and then gettin' in the studio and having it be beaten up and whacked *around* and come out with some kind of incoherent *thing* which didn't have any resonance. With that, I was *awake*. I felt freed up to do just about anything I pleased."**

But getting the band of his dreams into the studio was only half the battle. **"The records I used to listen to and still love, you can't make a record that sounds that way,"** he explains. It is as if having taken his new material down to the crossroads of the recording studio Dylan isn't wholly sure the deal struck with the devil there was worth it. **"Brian Wilson, he made all his records with four tracks, but you couldn't make his records if you had a *hundred* tracks today. We all like records that are played on record players, but let's face it, those days are *gon-n-n-e*. You do the best you can, you fight that technology in all kinds of ways, but I don't know anybody who's made a record that sounds decent in the past twenty years, really. You listen to these modern records, they're atrocious, they have sound all over them. There's no definition of nothing, no vocal, no nothing, just like—*static*. Even these songs probably sounded ten times better in the studio when we recorded 'em. CDs are *small*. There's no stature to it. I remember when that Napster guy came up across, it was like, 'Everybody's gettin' music for free.' I was like, 'Well, why not? It ain't *worth* nothing anyway.' "**. . .

Hearing the word "napster" come from Bob Dylan's mouth, I venture a question about bootleg recordings. In my own wishful thinking, *The Bootleg Series*, a sequence of superb archival retrospectives, sanctioned by Dylan and released by Columbia, represents a kind of unspoken consent to the tradition of pirate scholarship—an acknowledgment that Dylan's outtakes, alternate takes, rejected album tracks and live performances are themselves a

towering body of work that faithful listeners deserve to hear. As Michael Gray says in *The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia*, the first three-disc release of outtakes "could, of itself, establish Dylan's place as the pre-eminent songwriter and performer of the age and as one of the great artists of the twentieth century." On *Love and Theft*'s "Sugar Baby," the line "Some of these bootleggers, they make pretty good stuff" was taken by some as a shout-out to this viewpoint. Today, at least, that line seems to have had only moonshine whiskey as its subject. **"I still don't like bootleg records. There was a period of time when people were just bootlegging anything on me, because there was nobody ever in charge of the recording sessions. All my stuff was being bootlegged high and low, far and wide. They were never intended to be released, but everybody was buying them. So my record company said, 'Well, everybody else is buying these records, we might as well put them out.' "** But Dylan can't possibly be sorry that the world has had the benefit of hearing, for instance, "Blind Willie McTell"—an outtake from 1983's *Infidels* that has subsequently risen as high in most people's Dylan pantheon as a song can rise, and that he himself has played live since. Can he? **"I started playing it live because I heard the Band doing it. Most likely it was a demo, probably showing the musicians how it should go. It was never developed fully, I never got around to completing it. There wouldn't have been any other reason for leaving it off the record. It's like taking a painting by Manet or Picasso—goin' to his house and lookin' at a half-finished painting and grabbing it and selling it to people who are 'Picasso fans.' The only fans I know I have are the people who I'm looking at when I play, night after night."**

Dylan and his favorite-band-ever are just a few days from undertaking another tour, one that will be well under way by the time *Modern Times* is released in late August. I've always wanted to ask: When a song suddenly appears on a given evening's set list, retrieved from among the hundreds in his back catalog, is it because Dylan's been listening to his old records? **"I don't listen to *any* of my records. When you're inside of it, all you're listening to is a *replica*. I don't know why somebody would look at the movies they make—you don't read your *books*, do you?"** Point taken. He expands on the explanation he offered for "Blind Willie McTell": **"Strangely enough, sometimes we'll hear a cover of a song and figure we can do it just as well. If somebody else thought so highly of it, why don't I? Some of these arrangements I just *take*. The Dead did a lot of my songs, and we'd just take the whole arrangement, because they did it better than me. Jerry Garcia could hear the song in all my bad recordings, the song that was buried there. So if I want to sing something different, I just bring out one of them Dead records and see which one I wanna do. I *never* do that with my records."** Speaking of which: **"I've heard it said, you've probably heard it said, that all the arrangements change night after night. Well, *that's* a bunch of bullshit, they don't know what they're talkin' about. The arrangements don't change night after night. The rhythmic structures are different, that's all. You can't change the arrangement night after night—it's *impossible*."**

Dylan points out that whether a song comes across for a given listener on a given night depends on where exactly they're sitting. **"I can't stand to play arenas, but I do play 'em. But I know that's not where music's supposed to be. It's not meant to be heard in football stadiums, it's not 'Hey, how are you doin' tonight, Cleveland?' Nobody gives a shit how you're doin' tonight in Cleveland."** He grins and rolls his eyes, to let me know he knows he's teasing at *Spinal Tap* heresy. Then he plunges deeper. **"They say, 'Dylan never talks'. What the hell is there to *say*? That's not the reason an artist is in front of people."** The words seem brash, but his tone is nearly pleading. **"An artist has come for a different purpose. Maybe a self-help group—maybe a Dr. Phil—would say, 'How you doin'?' I don't want to get harsh and say I don't care. You do care, you care in a *big way*, otherwise you wouldn't be there. But it's a different kind of *connection*. It's not a light thing."** He considers further. **"It's alive every night, or it feels alive every night."** Pause. **"It becomes *risky*. I mean, you risk your life to play music, if you're doing it in the right way."** I ask about the minor-league baseball* stadiums he's playing in the new tour's first swing: Do they provide the sound he's looking for? **"Not really, not in the open air. The best sound you can get is an intimate club room, where you've got four walls and the sound just *bounces*. That's the way this music is meant to be heard."** Then

Dylan turns comedian again, the guy newly familiar to listeners of his XM satellite radio show, whose casual verbal riffs culminate in vaudeville one-liners. **"I wouldn't want to play a *really* small room, like ten people. Unless it was, you know, *$50,000 a ticket* or something."**

Let me take a moment and reintroduce myself, your interviewer and guide here. I'm a forty-two-year-old moonlighting novelist, and a lifelong Dylan fan, but one who, it must be emphasized, *doesn't remember the Sixties*. I'm no longer a young man, but I am young for the job I'm doing here. My parents were Dylan fans, and my first taste of his music came through their LPs—I settled on *Nashville Skyline*, because it looked friendly. The first Dylan record I was able to respond to as new—to witness its arrival in stores and reception in magazines, and therefore to make my own—was 1979's *Slow Train Coming*. As a fan in my early twenties, I digested Dylan's catalog to that point and concluded that its panoply of styles and stances was *itself* the truest measure of his genius—call us the *Biograph* generation, if you like. In other words, the struggle to capture Dylan and his art like smoke in one particular bottle or another seemed laughable to me, a mistaken skirmish fought before it had become clear that mercurial responsiveness—anchored only by the existential commitment to the act of connection in the present moment—was the gift of freedom his songs had promised all along. To deny it to the man himself would be absurd.

By the time I required anything of Bob Dylan, it was the mid-Eighties, and I merely required him to be *good*. Which, in the mid-Eighties, Dylan kind of wasn't. I recall taking home *Empire Burlesque* and struggling to discern songwriting greatness under the glittery murk of Arthur Baker's production, a struggle I lost. The first time I saw Dylan in concert, it was, yes, in a football stadium in Oakland, with the Grateful Dead. By the time of 1988's *Down in the Groove*, the album's worst song might have seemed to describe my plight as fan: I was in love with the ugliest girl in the world.

Nevertheless, Eighties Dylan was my Dylan, and I bore down hard on what was there. Contrary to what you may have heard (in *Chronicles, Volume One*, among other detractors), there was water in that desert. From scattered tracks like "Rank Strangers to Me," "The Groom's Still Waiting at the Altar" and "Brownsville Girl," to cassette-tape miracles like "Lord Protect My Child" and "Foot of Pride" (both later to surface on *The Bootleg Series*), to a version of "San Francisco Bay Blues" I was lucky enough to catch live in Berkeley, to a blistering take on Sonny Boy Williamson's "Don't Start Me to Talkin' " on *Late Night With David Letterman*, the irony is not only that "bad" Dylan was often astonishingly good. It is that his then-seemingly-rudderless exploration of roots-music sources can now be seen to point unerringly to the triumphs to come—I mean the triumphs of now. Not that Dylan himself would care to retrace those steps. When I gushed about the Sonny Boy Williamson moment on *Letterman*, he gaped, plainly amazed, and said, **"I played that?"**

So, the drama of *my* projected relationship to my hero, thin as it may seem to those steeped in the Sixties or Seventies listeners' sense of multiple betrayals—*he's gone Electric! Country-Domestic-Unavailable! Christian!*—was the one Dylan described to David Gates of *Newsweek* in 1997, and in the "Oh Mercy" chapter of his memoir, *Chronicles*—the relocation and repossession of his voice and of his will to compose and perform, as enacted gradually through the Nineties. Early in that decade it might have seemed he'd quit, or at least taken refuge or solace in the solo acoustic folk records he'd begun making in his garage: *Good As I Been to You* and *World Gone Wrong*. Live shows in what had become "The Never Ending Tour" were stronger and stronger in those years, but new songs were scarce. Then came *Time Out of Mind*, an album as cohesive—and ample—as any he'd ever recorded. When that was followed by *Love and Theft*, and then *Chronicles*, a reasonable Dylan fan might conclude he was living in the best of all possible worlds. In fact, with the satellite radio show beaming into our homes—Dylan's promised to do fifty of the things!—Dylan can be said to have delivered more of his voice and his heart to his audience in the past decade than ever before, and more than anyone might have reasonably dared to hope. **"Well, isn't that funny,"** Dylan snorts when I mention "the myth of inaccessibility." **"I've just seen that Wenner Books published a book of**

interviews with me that's *that* big." He stretches out his hands to show me. **"What happened to this inaccessibility? Isn't there a *dichotomy* there?**

Yet it's awfully easy, taking the role of Dylan's interviewer, to feel oneself playing surrogate for an audience that has never quit holding its hero to an impossible standard: The more he offers, the more we want. The greatest artist of my lifetime has given me anything I could ever have thought to ask, and yet here I sit, somehow brokering between him and the expectations neither of us can pretend don't exist. **"If I've got any kind of attitude about me—or about what I do, what I perform, what I sing, on any level, my attitude is, compare it to somebody *else*! Don't compare it to me. Are you going to compare Neil Young to Neil Young? Compare it to somebody else, compare it to Beck—which I like—or whoever else is on his level. This record should be compared to the artists who are working on the same ground. I'll take it any way it comes, but compare it to that. That's what everybody's record should be, if they're really serious about what they're doing. Let's face it, you're either serious about what you're doing or you're not serious about what you're doing. And you can't mix the two. And life is short."**

I can't help but wonder if he's lately been reconditioned by the success of the Martin Scorsese *No Direction Home* documentary, to feel again the vivid discomfort of his unwanted savior's role. **"You know, everybody makes a big deal about the Sixties. The Sixties, it's like the Civil War days. But, I mean, you're talking to a person who *owns* the Sixties. Did I ever want to acquire the Sixties? *No.* But I own the Sixties—who's going to argue with me?"** He charms me with another joke: **"I'll give 'em to you if you want 'em. You can have 'em."** For Dylan, as ever, what matters is the work, not in some archival sense, but in its present life. **"My old songs, they've got something—I agree, they've *got* something! I think my songs have been covered—maybe not as much as 'White Christmas' or 'Stardust,' but there's a list of over 5,000 recordings. That's a *lot* of people covering your songs, they must have *something*. If I was me, *I'd* cover my songs too. A lot of these songs I wrote in 1961 and '62 and '64, and 1973, and 1985, I can still play a lot of those songs—well, how many other artists made songs during that time? How many do you hear today? I love Marvin Gaye, I love all that stuff. But how often are you gonna hear 'What's Going On'? I mean, who *sings* it? Who sings 'Tracks of My Tears'? Where is *that* being sung tonight?"**

He's still working to plumb the fullest truth in the matter of his adventures in the recording studio. **"I've had a rough time recording. I've managed to come up with *songs*, but I've had a rough time recording. But maybe it should be that *way*. Because other stuff which *sounds* incredible, that can *move* you to tears—for all those who were knocked off our feet by listening to music from *yesteryear*, how many of those *songs* are really good? Or was it just the record that was great? Well, the record was great. The record was an *art form*. And you know, when all's said and done, maybe I was never part of that art form, because my records really weren't artistic at all. They were just documentation. Maybe *bad* players playing *bad* changes, but still something coming through. And the *something* that's coming through, for me today, was to make it just as real. To show you how it's real."** Dylan muses on the fate of art in posterity. **"How many people can look at the *Mona Lisa*? You ever been there? I mean, maybe, like, *three* people can see it at once. And yet, how long has that painting been around? More people have seen that painting than have ever listened to, let's name somebody—I don't want to say Alicia Keys—say, Michael Jackson. More people have ever seen the *Mona Lisa* than ever listened to Michael Jackson. And only three people can see it at once. Talk about *impact*."**

Conversation about painting leads to conversation about other forms. **"That's what I like about books, there's no *noise* in it. Whatever you put on the page, it's like making a painting. Nobody can change it. Writing a book is the same way, it's written in *stone*—it might as well be! It's never gonna change. One's not gonna be different in tone than another, you're not gonna have to turn this one up louder to read it."** Dylan savored the reception of *Chronicles*. **"Most people who write about music, they have no idea what it feels like to play it. But with the book I wrote, I thought, 'The people who are writing reviews of this book, man, they**

know what the hell they're talking about.' It spoils you. They know *how* to write a book, they know more about it than me. The reviews of this book, some of 'em almost made me cry—in a good way. I'd never felt that from a music critic, *ever*."

While my private guess would have been that Dylan had satisfied the scribbling impulse (or as he says on *Modern Times*, "I've already confessed/No need to confess again"), in fact he seems to be deep into planning for a *Chronicles, Volume Two*. **"I think I can go back to the *Blonde on Blonde* album—that's probably about as far back as I can go on the next book. Then I'll probably go forward. I thought of an interesting time. I made this record, *Under the Red Sky*, with Don Was, but at the same time I was also doing the *Wilburys* record. I don't know how it happened that I got into both albums at the same time. I worked with George** [Harrison] **and Jeff** [Lynne] **during the day—everything had to be done in one day, the track and the song had to be written in one day, and then I'd go down and see Don Was, and I felt like I was walking into a *wall*. He'd have a different band for me to play with every day, a lot of *all-stars*, for no particular purpose. Back then I wasn't bringing anything at *all* into the studio, I was completely disillusioned. I'd let someone else take control of it all and just come up with lyrics to the melody of the song. He'd say, 'What do you want to cut?'—well, I wouldn't have *anything* to cut, but I'd be so beat down from being up with the Wilburys that I'd just come up with some track, and everybody would fall in behind that track, oh, my God."** He laughs. **"It was sort of contrary to the Wilburys scene, which was being done in a mansion up in the hills. Then I'd go down to these other sessions, and they were in this cavelike studio down in Hollywood, where I'd spend the rest of the night, and then try to get some sleep. Both projects suffered some. Too many people in the room, too many musicians, too many egos, ego-driven musicians that just wanted to play their thing, and it definitely wasn't my cup of tea, but that's the record I'm going to feature."**

Now, this may be the place for me to mention that I find Side Two of *Under the Red Sky* one of the hidden treasures of Dylan's catalog. The album's closer, a garrulous but mysterious jump-blues called "Cat's in the Well," in particular, wouldn't be at all out of place on *Love and Theft* or *Modern Times*. But as he's told me, Dylan doesn't listen to the records. And unlike me, he claims no familiarity with *The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia*. (**"Those are not the circles I really move around in,"** he chuckles when I ask. **"That's not something that would overlap with my life."**) But just as when he praises his current band as his absolute best—an evaluation supporters of Mike Bloomfield and Al Kooper, not to mention Garth Hudson and Rick Danko, et al., might take issue with—I've come to feel that Dylan's sweeping simplifications of his own journey's story are outstandingly healthy ones. Puncturing myths, boycotting analysis and ignoring chronology are likely part of a long and lately quite successful campaign not to be incarcerated within his own legend. Dylan's greatest accomplishment since his Sixties apotheosis may simply be that he has claimed his story as his own. (Think of him howling the first line of "Most Likely You'll Go Your Way and I'll Go Mine" upon his return to the stage during the 1974 tour: "You say you love me and you're thinkin' of me/But you know you could be *wroooonngg!*"). I take our conversation today the way I took *Chronicles*, and the long journal-song "Highlands": as vivid and generous reports on the state of Bob Dylan and his feelings in the present moment.

In other words, never mind that I think *Under the Red Sky* is pretty good. After that early-Nineties disillusionment, how did he decide to record *Time Out of Mind*? **"They gave me another contract, which I didn't really want. I didn't want to record anymore, I didn't see any point to it, but lo and behold they made me an offer and it was hard to refuse. I'd worked with** [Daniel] **Lanois before, and I thought he might be able to bring that magic to this record. I thought, 'Well, I'll give it a try.' There must have been twelve, fifteen musicians in that room—four drummers notwithstanding. I really don't know how we got anything out of that."** He pauses to consider the record's reception. Released just after a much-publicized health scare, the album's doomy lyrics were widely taken as a musical wrestling match with the angel of death. **"I mean, it was perceived as me being some chronic invalid, or crawling on bleeding knees. But that was never the case."** I mention that some are already describing the new album

as the third in a trilogy, beginning with *Time Out of Mind*. Dylan demurs: **"*Time Out of Mind* was me getting back in and fighting my way out of the corner. But by the time I made *Love and Theft*, I was out of the corner. On *this* record, I ain't nowhere, you can't find me anywhere, because I'm *way* gone from the corner."** He still toys with the notion I've put before him. **"I would think more of *Love and Theft* as the beginning of a trilogy, if there's going to be a trilogy."** Then swiftly gives himself an out: **"If I decide I want to go back into the studio."**

In a day of circular talk we've circled back to the new record, and I venture to ask him again about certain motifs. *Modern Times* shades *Love and Theft*'s jocular, affectionate vibe into more ominous territory, the language of murder ballads and Edgar Allan Poe: foes and slaughter, haunted gardens and ghosts. Old blues and ballads are quoted liberally, like second nature. **"I didn't feel limited this time, or I felt limited in the way that you *want* to narrow your scope down, you don't want to *muddle* things up, you want every line to be clear and every line to be purposeful. This is the way I feel someplace in me, in my *genealogy*—a lot of us don't have the murderous *instinct*, but we wouldn't *mind* having the license to kill. I just let the lyrics go, and when I was singing them, they seemed to have an ancient presence."** Dylan seems to feel he dwells in a body haunted like a house by his bardlike musical precursors. **"Those songs are just in my genes, and I couldn't stop them comin' out. In a reincarnative kind of way, maybe. The songs have got some kind of a *pedigree* to them. But that pedigree stuff, that only works so far. You can go back to the ten-hundreds, and people only had one name. Nobody's gonna tell you they're going to go back further than when people had one name."** This reply puts an effective end to my connect-the-dots queries about his musical influences. I tell him that despite the talk of enemies, I found in the new record a generosity of spirit, even a sense of acceptance. He consents, barely. **"Yeah. You got to accept it *yourself* before you can expect anybody else to accept it. And in the long run, it's merely a record. Lyrics go by quick."**

When all is said and done, Bob Dylan is keen that I understand where he's coming from, and for me to understand that, I have to grasp what he saw in the artists who went before him. **"If you think about all the artists that recorded in the Forties and the Thirties, and in the Fifties, you had big bands, sure, but they were the vision of one man—I mean, the Duke Ellington band was the vision of one man, the Louis Armstrong band, it was the individual voice of Louis Armstrong. And going into all the rhythm & blues stuff, and the rockabilly stuff, the stuff that trained me to do what I do, that was all *individually* based. That was what you heard—the individual crying in the wilderness. So that's kind of lost too. I mean, who's the last individual performer that you can think of—Elton John, maybe? I'm talking about artists with the willpower not to conform to anybody's reality but their own. Patsy Cline and Billy Lee Riley. Plato and Socrates, Whitman and Emerson. Slim Harpo and Donald Trump. It's a lost art form. I don't know who else does it beside myself, to tell you the truth."** Is he satisfied? **"I always wanted to stop when I was on *top*. I didn't want to fade away. I didn't want to be a *has*-been, I wanted to be somebody who'd never be forgotten. I feel that, one way or another, it's OK now, I've done what I wanted for myself."**

These remarks, it should be noted, are yet another occasion for laughter. **"I see that I could stop touring at any time, but then, I don't really *feel* like it right now."** Short of promising the third part of the trilogy-in-progress, this is good enough news for me. May the Never Ending Tour never end. **"I think I'm in my middle years now,"** Bob Dylan tells me. **"I've got no retirement plans."**

*FOOTNOTE: So what's Bob Dylan's favorite baseball team, anyway? **"The problem with baseball teams is all the players get traded, and what your favorite team used to be—a couple of guys you really liked on the team, they're not on the team now—and you can't possibly make that team your favorite team. It's like your favorite uniform. I mean . . . yeah . . . I like Detroit. Though I like Ozzie** [Guillen] **as a manager. And I don't know how anybody can't like Derek** [Jeter]**. I'd rather have him on my team than anybody."**

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Edna Gundersen interview for *USA Today*

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DYLAN'S ART IS FOREVER A-CHANGIN'
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By Edna Gundersen, USA TODAY

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — Bob Dylan is not in the mood to reminisce.

"There's no nostalgia on this record," Dylan insists, disputing critics who hear bygone times on *Modern Times*, which arrives today. **"Pining for the past doesn't interest me."**

Mining his past, however, is a boomer preoccupation. Last year, Martin Scorsese's *No Direction Home*, accompanied by a soundtrack and companion scrapbook of memorabilia, traced Dylan's early rise. It followed 2004's autobiography, *Chronicles: Volume 1*, and the sixth edition of Dylan's Bootleg series. An upcoming biopic and Broadway musical also raid Dylan's back pages.

Yet Dylan did not sew up 20th-century glory to sit in the grandstands now. The '60s trailblazer who reinvented pop music and revolutionized songwriting is still a groundbreaking artist at 65, according to critics dazzled by *Modern Times*, Dylan's 31st studio album and third in a career renaissance launched by 1997's *Time Out of Mind*. Asserts Rolling Stone: "There is no precedent in rock 'n' roll for the territory Dylan is opening."

In earthy blues, ragtime and rockabilly, the language shifts from mischievous to mysterious and romantic to rueful as Dylan surveys a crumbling world in doubt-shrouded songs about love and vengeance, faith and fate.

The 10 songs, recorded with his touring band in January in New York, **"are in my genealogy,"** he says. **"I had no doubts about them. I tend to overwrite stuff, and in the past I probably would have left it all in. On this, I tried my best to edit myself, and let the facts speak. You can easily get a song convoluted. That didn't happen. Maybe I've had records like this before, but I can't remember when."**

Perched on a chair in a beachside hotel suite, Dylan fervently discusses his new music, smoothly evades unwelcome topics (politics) and dispenses disdain slyly. Asked to elaborate on today's hit-driven environment, he cracks a broad grin and says: **"I don't want to disparage anyone in pop music. I'm sure it's all good. I'm sure people are thriving."**

Modern's pared lyrics and spirited music evolved naturally, with Dylan never in fevered pursuit.

"The obsessiveness about songwriting is far away from me," he says. **"I can let it go for long periods. I don't need the songs. When you're younger, you keep writing so you have them to play. After a certain point, you can't play it all, anyway. It gets harder to find a purpose to do something different.**

"What I have to do is space out and almost hypnotize myself, without drugs, of course," he says with a laugh. **"Those are my best songs, when I'm not really conscious. Once my motive is established, it's up to me to find the ideal terminology, vocabulary, rhythms to work it out. I don't like writing songs where I have to come up with a far-fetched poetic thing and find a melody later. I've done that, and it doesn't work that well for me."**

He completed 14 or 15 songs last September, shelved those he considered **"lukewarm"** and pruned others. Tattered hymn *Workingman Blues #2* pays homage to Merle Haggard, who has pledged to write a *Blowin' in the Wind* sequel, Dylan says.

Writing poignant waltz *When the Deal Goes Down* **"demands all your attention,"** he says. **"There's no song you're listening to that's influencing it. The song you wrote before is irrelevant. All you can do is hang on and hope you do it justice."**

The initially nettlesome Nettie Moore **"troubled me the most, because I wasn't sure I was getting it right,"** Dylan says. **"Finally, I could see what the song is about. This is coherent, not just a bunch of random verses. I knew I wanted to record this. I was pretty hyped up on the melodic line."**

Shifting from playful romps to haunted ballads, Dylan encounters angels and lazy sluts, floods and the plague, a blind horse, a sick mule and Alicia Keys, his quest in *Thunder on the Mountain*. He never met the R&B ingénue but admired her performance at the 2001 Grammys. He says: **"I liked her a whole lot. People stay in your mind for one reason or another."**

The unusually accessible *Modern* still leads into dark mazes, and Dylan isn't handing out flashlights.

"Words go by awfully quick," he says. **"Maybe it's hard for a listener to comprehend them all. Maybe they don't want to. I couldn't say what these songs add up to, any more than I can say what the rest of my songs add up to. They mean what they say they mean. They strike you where you can feel it, and you can feel what they mean. With this kind of music, you want to move somebody, and you have to move yourself first."**

Still making planet waves

Dylan's undiminished authority springs from supernatural talent, says friend and admirer Tom Petty, stating simply: "He's better than all of us. Backing him in the '80s had a huge effect on our band. Bob has a spontaneity that comes from folk or even the best jazz artists. It's very fresh and alive. We learned if the song is durable and good, you can approach it a lot of ways. He gets better and better. He's had his patchy periods, but we all hang with him because we know any day he might write the best thing he's ever done."

Dylan's evolution runs counter to the industry's growing reliance on forged images, synthetic sounds and boundless technology. When recording spare folk albums *Good as I Been to You* (1992) and *World Gone Wrong* (1993) in his garage, an engineer suggested he pin a microphone to each guitar string.

"It was the height of insanity," Dylan says. **"There are so many layers on records today. There are so many tracks in studios, and producers think they have to use them. This is no art form. It's just corporate sound. Because there's very little there, you have to dress it up with all these tracks. For me, everything has to have a purpose or it should get lost.**

"The beat stuff people play, that's as far away from real rhythm as the sun is from the moon. Those beats make people pose, but they don't make people move or change their lives. They're low-key and laid-back, and that's what popular music has come to. Even metal is ponderous."

He stops himself and chuckles.

"I hate to go on my soapbox about the recording industry. I'm sure there's a lot of good songs getting recorded today, but I can't hear them. I'm just hearing buzz. There's a superficiality to it which might be successful, but people forget about it real quick and go on to the next one instantly. I don't want to be a performer like that."

Dylan aims to tell a truthful story and nourish it on stage. Keeping it real doesn't mean copping ideas from CNN or responding to the conflict du jour, which is why you won't find an updated *Masters of War* on *Modern Times*.

"Didn't Neil Young do that?" he jokes, referring to the rocker's recent anti-war disc. **"What more is there to say? What's funny about the Neil record, when I heard *Let's Impeach the President*, I thought it was something old that had been lying around. I said, 'That's crazy, he's doing a song about Clinton?' "**

Topical songs **"are not my thing. I'm not good at it. Stuff you read in papers is secondhand information. My stuff is my own experience."**

Contradicting a label report, he doesn't regard *Modern* as the last in a trilogy, because Grammy-winning *Time Out of Mind*, produced by Daniel Lanois, is an odd fit.

"I had no band," Dylan says. **"I didn't pick half the musicians. It was a mystery to me how I was going to get anything out of those sessions. It was just a mess. There was hardly any communication."**

Under the pseudonym Jack Frost, Dylan reluctantly produced 2001's *Love and Theft* and *Modern*. He says the only producer he ever felt comfortable with was "Bumps" Blackwell, who guided early Little Richard and Sam Cooke records and co-produced 1981's *Shot of Love*.

"He made simple records and understood my stuff inside out. A producer should be raised on the same kind of music. When I bring in a song, it's not that well known — to me or anyone else. How can I expect to show someone the intricacies and nuances?"

A freewheeling free agent

Dylan waxes ecstatic about his current sidemen, yet he's a defiant solo artist who dismisses the concept of bands as little gangs.

"The performers who changed my life were individuals," he says. **"They didn't conform to any sense of reality but their own. The last performer who stood up to be counted as an original is Bruce Springsteen, I think. Individuals move me, not mobs. People with originality, whether it's Hector, Achilles, Ted Turner or Jerry Lee Lewis or Hank Williams."**

That explains why he has been drawn to boxing since high school.

"Almost everyone else played a team sport," he says. **"I liked boxing because it was just you and you alone. And you didn't get hurt. It seemed like you got mangled in football and hit in the head with baseballs. Team sports were not my cup of tea.**

"I took a professional opponent on the road with me, and I'd box in the afternoons to focus my mind. This guy could walk across a football field on his hands. I kept it up. Still do, as much as I can. I'd like to race a car around a track. Those guys are really alone too."

Dylan is a busy loner. As he wraps up his third tour of minor-league baseball parks, he's planning a fall arena tour that starts Oct. 11 and enjoying his weekly DJ stint on XM satellite radio. He has yet to carve out time to write the second Chronicles book.

He's only peripherally entangled in other enterprises. Todd Haynes is directing I'm Not There, a Dylan biopic with a half dozen actors portraying the bard at various stages. Twyla Tharp plumbed his catalog for Broadway-bound dance musical *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. He consented to both projects without much hand-wringing.

"A lot of people are very protective of what they've got and rightfully so," he says. **"But so much has been done to me and to my work, and it's been exploited on such grandiose levels with no thought of me, that you get to a point where you don't care anymore. Anything that comes your way is better than somebody taking it their way.**

"I don't care about image. I don't have any image problem. It matters not to me which commercials or movies or TV shows they're in or not in or how many are being sung in clubs or school plays."

No ranking of best artists, songs or songwriters fails to name him. He topped Paste magazine's list of greatest living songwriters in June, then led the August issue's roster of greatest dead songwriters, because he'd obviously be there eventually, anyway. Always ahead of his time. Dylan laughs at this news. Once hungry for immortality, he no longer sweats his place in the pantheon. He doesn't need to.

"I got past that," he says. **"Posterity has to take care of itself. All that's important in the present time is: Do the songs work for me when I play? I can't get away with singing cover songs like Rod Stewart. Nobody's going to buy it, first of all. I love those songs, but I have to play my songs, and they have to work in a crash-and-burn kind of way. There's more to my music than the lyrics. You would only know that if you have open ears and an open mind, and you give me a clear channel."**

He laughs. **"Give me an unpaved road to your heart."**

Missing interviews

here's a list of items i have been successful in finding traces of, albeit not the interviews themselves.

1. **1962-04-00** WYNC-Radio, New York, Interviewer: Henrietta Yurchenko.
2. **1962-10-00** New York Interviewer : Billy Faier
   Broadcast by WBAI radio Oct 1962; tape available
3. **1962-10-00** Interviewer: Rachel Price
   For *FM-Stereo Guide (or was it "FM-Listeners' Guide*")
4. **1963-03-00** Bob Fass Show Tape available
5. **1963-06-00** Interviewer: Nat Hentoff
   For *Playboy* magazine.
6. **1963-08-22** Interviewer: Jack Smith
   Printed in *The National Guardian*
7. **1963-10-20** Interviewer: Michael Iachetta
   Printed in *Daily News*
8. **1964-02-00** early Feb 1964 Toronto Interviewer : Helen McNamara
   Printed in *Toronto Telegram* 3 Feb 1964 Also interview in *Gargoyle Interviews Bob Dylan* in *Gargoyle* magazine Feb 1964 Both referred to in *Steppin' Out* by Brian and Val Lawlan
9. **1964-10-00** *Brown University Daily Herald*
10. **1964-12-07** University of Santa Barbara Interviewer : Bob Blackmar
    Broadcast by KCSB radio 13 minute tape available
11. **1965-01-12** *New York Post*
12. **1965-04-00** London Interviewer : Sarah Ward
    Broadcast 25 June 1965; see *Steppin' Out* by Brian and Val Lawlan
13. **1965-04-28** *Daily Sketch* by Michael Hellicar
14. **1965-09-18** *Toronto Star* by Robert Fulford
15. **1965-10-24** Detroit 24 Oct 1965 Interviewer : Allen Stone
    Broadcast by WDTM radio 15 minute tape available
16. **1966-03-00** March 1966? Beverley Hills Hotel Los Angeles Press Conference
    Published in *Teenset* magazine as *An Interview with the controversial Bob Dylan* in Nov 1966
17. **1966-03-08** *Look Magazine by* Sam Castan & Daniel Kramer, 76-82.
18. **1966-04-00** in *Sound and Fury* by Henrietta Yurchenco
19. **1966-06-00** *Music Maker* Australia
20. **1969-06-00** *Nashville Banner,* Jun 1969 (Red O'Donnell).
21. **1969-08-27** *Daily Sketch* (Chris White).
22. **1969-09-00** *Top Pop* (Ian Brady).
23. **1971-04-17**, place unknown Interviewer unknown
    From *Record Mirror* 17 April 1971
24. **1971-05-00**, place unknown Interviewer: Yediot Acronot
25. **1973-03-15** *Rolling Stone* (Chet Flippo).
26. **1974-01-16**, place unknown Interviewer: Tom Zito
    For the *Washington Post*
27. **1975-10-00**, place unknown Interviewer: Larry Sloman
    For *Rolling Stone*
28. **1978-01-00** John Austin interview, ?
29. **1978-02-00**, Australia Interviewer : Julia Orange
    Tape available
30. **1978-02-03** *Minneapolis Star* interview by Jon Bream
31. **1978-02-06** *New Times* interview
32. **1978-02-12** *Houston Post* interview by Mary Campbell
33. **1978-02-00** Philip Fleishman Interview
    published in the March 20th 1978 edition of *Maclean's*

34. **1978-10-07** *Toronto Sun* interview by Peter Goddard
35. **1978-11-12** John Mankiewicz interview for *Sound*
36. **1978-11-00** various stops along 1978 tour Interviewer : Pete Oppel
    Published in *Dallas Morning News* in six parts 18-23 Nov 1978
37. **1980-05-00** Interviewer : Karen Hughes
    Published in *The Village Voice* 2 May 1980
38. **1980-11-21** San Francisco/San Diego, Interviewer : Ernesto Bladden
    Broadcast by KPRI FM 21 Nov 1980 12 minute tape available
39. **1980-11-30** KINK Interview, Seattle, Washington Tape available 16min
40. **1981-06-27** *Melody Maker* interview
41. **1981-10-00** *Milwaukee Journal* interview (Divina Infusino)
42. **1984-01-02** *Us* interview, Martin Keller
43. **1984-06-00** Paris Interviewer : Pamela Andriotakis
    Printed in *People* 16 July 1984
44. **1985-11-13** 25 Year Award Speech Whitney Museum New York Tape available
45. **1986-02-07** Auckland Interviewer : Stuart Coupe
    Published in Rip It Up (NZ) March 1986; also "The Age" 21 Feb 1986, "BAM" 9 May 1986 (Australia)
46. **1989-06-00** *Elegtherotoupia,* Greece
47. **1989-09-00** Dan Neer interview WNEW FM NYC Tape available
48. **1990-10-00** late October/early November – unpublished Esquire interview
    (TWM#1595,1625)
49. **1993-08-21** MTV interview Tape available
50. **1994-04-00** Akihiko Yamamoto interview for *Crossbeat,* Japan

do get in touch when you have anything from the list. not only me, but the whole bob dylan fan community will benefit. thank you.